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The Nation. 125

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The article below, by Gore Vidal, is adapted from his speech, "The State of the Union," delivered in Berkeley, California, at an event that is one of many being held throughout the country to celebrate The Nation*'s 125th anniversary year.*

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EDITORIAL

BLOOD, OIL AND POLITICS

Why does it sound so familiar? The undisputed bully of the region, seeking to protect and extend his hegemony, launches a midnight attack on a small but strategically located country to his south—in his "backyard." Deep in debt from past failed military adventures and extravagant arms buildups, the bully is worried that the principal resource of the targeted country is out of his control, and might actually be used to his detriment. Crucial shipping lanes are at stake. The small country is a major financial center. Previous attempts to subvert, realign or otherwise squeeze the offending country have been ineffective. But the regime of the small country is no great shakes either. It was created and delineated as a fiction of a nation by an imperial superpower only at the beginning of this century, and it has existed by and large for the superpower's benefit.

When the bully strikes with his gleaming weaponry and well-trained troops, it falls within hours and its undemocratic, authoritarian leader is sent into exile. Stirring sentiments are presented as a rationale for the invasion, which has killed at least several hundred civilians and introduced an army of occupation into the no-longer-independent country. But the pretense hardly hides the naked power play. Out of the blue, a jury-rigged government of the bully's choosing is installed in the middle of the night, a new army

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VDTs AND CANCER
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FEMINISM AND CULTURE
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THE TREE OF LIBERTY

NOTES ON OUR PATRIARCHAL STATE

GORE VIDAL

Thomas Jefferson. This is where it all begins. With his Declaration of Independence, he created the *idea* of the American Revolution, as opposed to the less glamorous and certainly less noble business of simply deciding who pays tax to whom. Along with the usual separated-colony boilerplate, there would be a new nation founded upon life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The first two foundation stones were familiar if vague. What, after all, *is* liberty? Liberty *from* what? From everyone else? From decent opinion? From accountability? That debate goes on. But the notion of freedom from tyranny is an ancient one and everyone thinks he knows what Jefferson meant, including dreamy Tom himself.

The "pursuit of happiness" is the real joker in the deck. No one is quite sure just what Jefferson meant, but I suppose he had it in mind that government would leave each citizen alone to develop as best he can in a tranquil climate to achieve whatever it is that his heart desires with minimum distress to the other pursuers of happiness. This was a revolutionary concept in 1776. It still is. With a

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LETTERS.

SEMI-FICTIONAL BURP

Blairstown, N.J.

Starting one's day with *The Nation* is seldom an aid to digestion, but David Kaufman's article "The Semi-Fictional Solution" [June 18] made me choke on my breakfast doughnut.

Kaufman reports that since we now have simulated news events, "fictional biographies" and "creative license" in nonfiction writing, "long-held barriers are eroding with a vengeance." Tom Wolfe, he says, has seen the future of the novel and uttered his pronouncement—research. Literature has just taken a giant step forward with the novelist as researcher, the novel as "a-fictional."

Kaufman may be earnest, but he is also naïve. The fiction writer has always been free to loot the world's history or his or her own. This is called material. The fiction writer then breaks up the material and rearranges the pieces. Fiction is an art form. The final product, the work of fiction, has no reality except as an object. When Kaufman talks about a "healthy and active exchange between what is real and what is imagined" in literature, he has confounded the process of writing with the product. The "truth" of fiction can never supplant historical "truth." It is a different kind of truth entirely.

It worries me that Kaufman does not understand the absolute difference between what a novelist does and what a journalist does. I know, I know. He's saying that reality is oh so prismatic and there is no one truth, and consequently, we've got this lovely "creative license." Well, sorry, I don't buy it. Who says it's O.K. to write "fictional biographies"? I find that concept repulsive. As for "creative license" in journalism—it's scarcely a new problem. What's new is the journalist of the Unabashed Ego, who gives us his biases undiluted and then insists that we applaud.

I share Kaufman's belief that fiction can provide a certain kind of passionate insight into history. But for most of us, the quality of that experience is determined by the writer's ability to transform his or her material, not by the material alone. Writers of fiction, Mr. Kaufman, are primarily manipulators of words. I know you will find that shocking, but there it is.

So I'm all for keeping the barriers intact. What we need is more clarity, not less. The facts haven't failed us, we have failed them. What's missing in The Age of Lies is a public with critical habits of mind, the ability to separate fact from fiction. It was a bit of fiction presented as history that helped get the Germans Adolf Hitler. I refer to the "Thousand Year Reich."

"A-fictional" literature? Hey! Shakespeare Revered as Researcher! As for nonfiction—history, biography, journalism—I'll take mine straight up, please, with no maraschino cherries and as little creative garbage as possible. *Ursula Perrin*

KAUFMAN REPLIES

New York City

Although I read Ursula Perrin's letter on a relatively empty stomach, I still feel the need to defend and perhaps clarify my original argument. If anything, my discussion of Ella Leffland's *The Knight, Death and the Devil*, W.D. Wetherell's *Chekhov's Sister*, Jay Parini's *The Last Station*, and to a lesser extent Michael Herr's *Walter Winchell*, was in response to my own dismay concerning a growing tendency on many fronts to obfuscate the difference between fact and fiction. But given the stunning results of these novelists, I endeavored to surmount the prejudice I share with Perrin against the very "concept" of fictional biographies: to discover that there is nothing inherently odious in a burgeoning literary trend that combines the materials of fact with the techniques of fiction, and to celebrate these particular novels as achievements in any case.

I evidently erred in failing to emphasize the point, but each of those authors (as well as their respective publishers) was careful to present his or her book as a work of fiction. Leffland, for one, takes extra precautions to explain in a preface why the fictional approach seemed more effective for capturing her contradictory subject, Hermann Göring. With even graver concern, she stipulates in an afterword where the facts stopped and her imagination began, nevertheless incorporating ten years of palpable and solid research. The danger instead in what Perrin calls The Age of Lies is in the reverse, as I also alluded to it: in presenting a work such as Lillian Hellman's *Pentimento*—or more currently Gronowicz's *Garbo*—as a work of nonfiction, when the cumulative evidence suggests suspect motives and a corruption or exploitation of such categorization.

What I hoped to convey above all else in "The Semi-Fictional Solution" is that these very questions have perhaps acquired an unprecedented urgency in an era that demonstrates less respect for the difference between fact and illusion, truth and deception, accuracy and distortion; or as I wrote, "long after images supplanted words, the reality that both set out to capture [has] become increasingly polluted and remote."

I expect that Perrin would find much to admire in *Chekhov's Sister*, *The Knight, Death and the Devil* and *The Last Station*, since each of these *novels* (for novels they are) has discovered a unique and penetrating way for devising a kind of poetic truth to comment on more elusive realities, no matter how slippery and subject to perspective we know them to be. To end this letter as I ended the piece—with a quote from *Chekhov's Sister*—we need "to wrench back the language from the politicians and the dictators and the propagandists and so find the balm to assuage the pain." This is precisely what these novelists and superb word manipulators have done. *David Kaufman*

EMPEROR OF THE UR-SCREAM

Capon Bridge, W.Va.

Arthur C. Danto's checklist of painterly tracks to the ur-scream in the work of Francis Bacon ["Art," July 30], an apparent attempt to crack the metaphysical code of Bacon's primary, and early, image, is a tortured exercise that leaves the reader knee-deep in words, words, words. (Astonishingly, Danto ignores a painting that ought to have been basic to his point of view: David Alfaro Siqueiros's 1937 *Echo of a Scream*.) What's the point of such extraordinarily obvious explication? Like an eager Zen novice, Danto renders the fat and discards the lean. Bacon's art is a splendid explanation: The agon is self-sustaining. Apparently Danto cannot bear what may have been Bacon's mocking self-defense against ignorance and fatuity, inspired by critics, when he described himself in that "famous interview" as a mere technician of screams.

What a bore! It's summer. It's hot. I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream. *James Hashim*

CLEARING BUCHAREST

Truro, Mass.

If I correctly understand your front-page editorial in the issue of July 9, you approve of Romanian President Iliescu's use of about 7,000 "miners brought in from the north" in "clearing the city center" of Bucharest. As I understand the facts, what was happening in the city center was peaceful assembly to protest the conduct of the government, and what the miners did was club down peaceful protesters. Will it be all right with you, the next time there's a peaceful march on Washington against whatever bullying military intervention President Bush may commit against another nation, for Pres. to bring in, say, 7,000 superpatriots from the Southwest to help "clear the city center" by beating up the protesters? Please clarify your attitude toward those 7,000 goon-like inspired thugs. *Ronald Radosh*

What happened in Bucharest is ugly. But the editorial was not a defense of the miners, Iliescu's dou loyalty of his security forces or that the opposition protest inspired. It was about the fe Western commentators, wh pect Eastern European cou how rudimentary their d tions, to behave like Dem The West's decision in Jul ic aid to Romania is a fur dication of our fears future.

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EDITORIALS.

Blood, Oil

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

and police force are created to enforce the new order, and the bully announces that he is "withdrawing" his troops as soon as peace is restored.

The international organization responsible for the region votes overwhelmingly to condemn the invasion, but that hardly deters the bully, whose hegemonic appetite is insatiable and whose "national interest" provides the moral justification for every brutal act. Not entirely incidentally, the invasion is wildly popular at home—the people are mad for victory after a succession of dismal defeats—and the bully's ratings rise to historic heights, at a time when intractable domestic problems are mounting.

The bully of the week is, of course, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, conqueror of Kuwait, but the idea that, with a few allowances for differences in scale, the paradigm fits George Bush, scourge of Panama, should give the pious politicians and smug policy rats in Washington some pause. It wasn't too long ago that they were cheering the destruction and

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occupation of America's own bad neighbor to the south, which had become uppity and unreliable. Kuwait was breaking the OPEC rules and overproducing oil. That was deeply damaging to Iraq's economy, which needed high oil prices to make up the deficit incurred in its war with Iran. Panama was refusing to go along with U.S. Central America policy, Noriega seemed to be getting chummy with Washington's enemies and the country's great resource—the canal—could conceivably have slipped from U.S. control.

The comparison in no way excuses or justifies the activities of Saddam Hussein, who by all accounts is a real rotter and deserves the worst from all he offends. But it wasn't so long ago that the Reagan Administration was tilting mightily to Hussein and Bush was opposing Congressional cutoffs of loans to Iraq. No one complained much when he invaded Iran—and later bombed an American warship, killing thirty-seven sailors—or even when he used poison gas. Hussein's elevation from greedy adventurer to world-historical monster (the *New York Times* columnists liken him to Hitler, while *Time* prefers Nebuchadnezzar) suggests that something else is going on, a dynamic different from the simple one of law and outlaw promoted most of all by the United States. No ordinary despot could produce the war fever that has taken over the country and has allowed Bush to begin the biggest military mobilization since the end of the war in Vietnam.

At bottom, the larger war of which the current conflict on the shores of the Persian Gulf is a part has been going on for years, in episodes of heat and cold. It's the new war of resources that replaced the old superpower cold war as the pre-eminent international conflict long before the Berlin wall came down. The industrialized "West" has long relied on the extraction of cheap resources from the rest of the world for its increasingly lavish lives and booming economies. To keep the prices low, political control was necessary, and when direct imperialism was no longer a viable option, suitable methods of indirect domination were applied.

What President Bush meant when he called the establishment of an Iraqi client government in Kuwait "unacceptable" (as a replacement for the Western client emir) was that Iraqi control over the price of oil is unacceptable. The problem is not that Hussein is a madman (which has become the cliché description of all our darker-skinned enemies—and if you're looking for real horror shows, the Saudis, after all, cut off heads and hands and run a barely postfeudal society of unspeakable repression) but that he is no longer *our* madman. Like Noriega, he struck out on his own.

The United States, which is leading—indeed, compelling—the international attack on Hussein, has been itching for a war against the Muslims at least since Iran took its hostages. First there was the "Desert 1" fiasco, then the bombing and forced retreat of the Marines from Beirut, the Palestinian *intifada*, the continuous acts of terrorism, the hostages in Lebanon, Abu this and Abu that. Nothing seemed to work. Even the bombing of Tripoli was a bit of a dud. The top guns in their billion-dollar bombers missed Qaddafi and things are about the way they were before. Now the Christians are ready once again to have at the Saracens.

Bringing America to the brink of war in the Arabian desert is a risky business for Bush. At the outset the facade of multinationalism for the effort was destroyed when America's two biggest client states in the Arab world, Egypt and Morocco, pulled out before they had even joined. Although the United Nations voted economic sanctions with amazing speed and unanimity (only Yemen and Cuba abstained in the Security Council), Bush is avoiding using the world organization for peacekeeping.

The reason, of course, is that his aim is not peacekeeping but warmaking. War sounds good to him now for many reasons, domestic and diplomatic. With the economy teetering and about to go over the edge because of the "oil shock," there will be cries for action and Bush can be ahead of the pack by sending in the troops. The specter of Jimmy Carter must be looming large in the night corridors of the White House. Nor is it difficult to detect a fine Israeli hand in the preparation for war. The elimination of Saddam Hussein and Iraq's military potential has long been a priority for Israel. And demonizing the Butcher of Baghdad diverts attention from Israel's own occupied territories.

And above all, Bush—who goes way back in the oil business—wants to control that commodity in its most abundant reserves. The risk that he may be starting a version of Vietnam in the Middle East will be taken so that the United States can maintain dominance. Resource wars, like the other kinds, are hell.

Unfortunately for the United States and its co-capitalists, the larger war is unwinnable, even though Baghdad may yet get bombed, the pipelines could be perforated and oil kingpin Saddam Hussein might end up in a U.S. court on trial for petroleum crimes. The people who have the resources have learned that it is possible to manipulate their sale in such a way as to improve their own lives and economies. It's not easy. Until now, the buyers have always had more guns than the sellers, and there are always people eager to be bought off. But the postcolonial system is inherently unstable, as was its predecessor, and in this day and age a new order is bidding to bury it.

The Army's Game

Hardly was the ink dry on the first human rights accord in Salvadoran history, signed by the Arena government and the F.M.L.N. in Costa Rica on July 26, before two members of Rubén Zamora's Popular Social Christian Movement were arrested and tortured by soldiers from the Second Brigade of the Salvadoran armed forces. Two days later soldiers fired mortar shells on a repopulated village, recently renamed Comunidad Ignacio Ellacuría after the slain Jesuit priest, and on July 30 the disfigured body of 24-year-old Jorge Cruz was discovered on the side of a road in Sonsonate Province.

Thus was inscribed the Cristiani government's commitment to peace through negotiation. The accord, reached only after the third round of United Nations–supervised talks had come to an impasse, allows the government to affect a

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posture of flexibility while conceding nothing.

The general human rights standards outlined in the agreement were intended for "immediate" implementation. But provisions for proper arrest procedures and the prohibition of torture are already contained in the Salvadoran Constitution and international law and have never hindered the army in the past. In the first six months of this year alone, according to the Salvadoran nongovernmental Human Rights Commission, the army killed 561 civilians.

The accord's provision for establishing a U.N. mission in El Salvador with investigative powers, while a welcome development, is unlikely to intimidate a military dedicated to eliminating such observers. Even if U.N. officials are spared the fate of human rights activist Herbert Anaya, gunned down in 1987 while taking his children to school, the mere tallying of deaths is no new solution. As Gerardo Le Chevalier, a leader of the Christian Democrats, observed, "If you don't dismantle the whole structure of human rights violations, you don't need a referee to write down the score."

The work of the U.N. mission, however, will not even begin until a cease-fire is reached, bringing us back full circle to the chief obstacles encountered throughout the talks. During the second round of negotiations in Mexico in June, the F.M.L.N. put forward a series of demands for profound changes in the structure of the armed forces and for the eradication of death squads. Those proposals were repeatedly rebuffed.

Rebels call for the expulsion of 200 officers accused of torture and assassination; the government insists on amnesty. Rebels urge the end of forced recruitment; the government wants national conscription. Rebels demand elimination of the National Intelligence Directorate; the government would put it under the aegis of the president. So it goes.

Days after the accord was signed, Salvadoran military Chief of Staff Col. René Emilio Ponce was complaining that the pact "could limit our military intelligence and affect the morale of the security forces." But there is an element of guile behind such frankness. By displaying resistance to the accord, the government's acceptance of it seems generous. This appearance of "movement" will play well in Washington and is likely to be used by Secretary of State James Baker as he prepares to raise the bipartisan umbrella under which Congress can huddle while it votes to maintain aid to El Salvador. Already the Bush Administration, looking to torpedo the 50 percent cut in aid that passed in the House in June, has said that it might accept a reduction of 15 percent to 30 percent.

It is this continued aid that enables the Arena government to resist structural change, that forces the F.M.L.N. to consider launching another offensive and that subverts the Salvadoran peace process. And it is this money that adds to the growing pile of corpses. Yesterday it was Jesuit priests, a housekeeper and her daughter; today it is Jorge Cruz. Until U.S. aid is stopped, the question remains: Who will Washington's bullets kill tomorrow? RICHARD MCKERROW

Richard McKerrow is a freelance journalist based at The Nation *and a contributing editor to* Lies of Our Times.

Screen Test

An article exposing the risks of video display terminal radiation published in the trade publication *Macworld* has prodded the Apple company, which makes the Macintosh computer, into announcing that it supports the development of industrywide safety standards for electromagnetic emissions from computer screens. That the magazine would run the remarkable nine-page investigation, "The Magnetic-Field Menace" by Paul Brodeur, was highly unusual. Trade magazines are not noted for challenging the industries on whose advertising they grow fat [see "Beltway Bandits," July 2]. But *Macworld* did, and Brodeur, noted muckraker of the asbestos industry and author of the recent book *Currents of Death: Power Lines, Computer Terminals, and the Attempt to Cover Up Their Threat to Your Health*, made a compelling case that the hundreds of thousands of people who work daily at

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★

QUESTIONING DAVID SOUTER

(THREE TACKS DEMOCRATIC SENATORS COULD TAKE)

Unfocused Reluctance

I'll grant you it's no smoking gun,
But in some ways it's hotter:
Can we confirm a judge who's got
Sununu's imprimatur?

Simple Wonder

A character beyond dispute?
No accusations to refute?
Did no one ever institute
A suit that claimed you took some loot?
Not once, did you go on a toot?
Or hit some brute right in the snoot
When he, attempting to be cute,
Insisted that a man named Sout-
er would, of course, be known as Zoot?
Or taste . . . er . . . ah . . . forbidden fruit?
Or once neglect your paper route?

Measured Relief

The others mentioned being mainly loonies,
I'll settle for a no one from the boonies.

Calvin Trillin

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

He Blew It

It is uncertain how much time history will afford Saddam Hussein to rue his subsequent tactics, but by midmorning of the day of his invasion of Kuwait he stood poised to enter history as the strategist of a brilliant *coup de main*. Politically and militarily he had achieved the first great victory, surprise. He had the sympathy of the Arab world and of Iran, which like Iraq was being bankrupted by the overproduction of oil from Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

As Kuwait and the U.A.E. flouted OPEC guidelines and the United States cheaply replenished its strategic oil reserve, the price of oil fell to $14 a barrel in June and the trend lines suggested that with adjustments for inflation the oil producing countries might soon be back where they started before the oil shock of 1973, selling their resources cheaply to sustain the faltering boom in the West and in Japan. Hussein himself said that every dollar off the oil price cost Iraq $1 billion a year. At the July meeting of OPEC, Saudi Arabia aligned itself with Iraq, as did Iran. In the face of such an unusual coalition the Emir of Kuwait obdurately continued his overproduction.

But then Saddam erred in his tactics, coarsened in judgment by the thuggery and methodical totalitarianism of his internal political rule and by the prolonged brutality of the war with Iran. If Saddam had engineered a less flagrant takeover, had mustered a less insultingly obvious puppet government, even called for a referendum on a new constitution by all residents of Kuwait, while playing more craftily for Arab support, he would have been in a far less assailable position. By mid-Friday he held the initiative. When the weekend was over it had passed from his hands.

He Was Their Man

The bellows of outrage by George Bush, Margaret Thatcher and other leaders against Iraq's seizure of Kuwait should not be allowed to obscure the less virtuous realities of the situation. The regional political culture in which the dictator has flourished is in considerable part the consequence of Western actions. Saddam has long been the recipient of American, British, West German and French credits and military supplies. On December 20, as U.S. soldiers invaded Panama, the White House announced it would lift the ban on loans to Iraq. A month later the State Department explained that the "goal of increasing U.S. exports puts us in a better position to deal with Iraq regarding its human rights record." Today Iraq is the world's largest recipient of U.S. subsidized grain sales; two months ago Bush refused to endorse sanctions against Baghdad. On August 2 the Washington correspondent of the *Financial Times* remarked that "despite evidence that [agricultural] credits were being used by Iraq to finance military equipment, the Administration bowed to farming interests and allowed the funding to continue until last month."

U.S. strategists spent the end of the 1970s and most of the 1980s seeing Iran as the rogue power in the area. Of course Washington was as indifferent to the Persian mullahs hanging the left opposition as to Saddam's shooting Communists or gassing Kurds. Iraq was an oil-rich customer, and a useful counterweight to Iran's fervid rhetoric against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. As so often in the past, these strategists were fighting every war except the one that finally took place.

Now the most imposing artillery barrages from the United States will be unleashed in rhetoric on Capitol Hill. We may confidently await a tidal wave of verbiage from Pentagon officials about the need for long-range transports, stand-off antitank weapons, air-to-air missiles, the Stealth and new versions of military impedimenta that are, at the moment of crisis, proving entirely useless beyond their fundamental function of keeping the U.S. economy on track.

And Now He's Doing Them Wrong

It has been virtually impossible, the length and breadth of the U.S. and British press, to find any mention of Panama or any suggestion that there might be comparability in the invasions. An exception occurred when Dan Rather was interviewing Arabs in Jordan. One responded, "When the United States invades Grenada in 1982, when the United States invades Panama, nobody stops in front of George Wash—or Ronald Reagan, all right, and tell him, 'Hey, guy, what are you doin' here?' "

But the U.S. invasion of Panama has been erased from memory just as has Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which received the full support of the United States. The United Nations is now enjoying the respectful attention of the U.S. press, since its almost unanimous condemnation of Iraq suits Western interests. For years the Security Council and the General Assembly have been passing virtually unanimous resolutions, with the United States either vetoing or being in a minority of two or three. Back in 1982, when the Security Council tried to pass a resolution enjoining Israel to permit emergency relief to enter beleaguered West Beirut, the United States promptly vetoed it. Meanwhile the press denounced the U.N. as a "Third World talking shop." History is the propaganda of the victors. *The Boston Globe*'s editorial for August 9 hailed "the UN's coming of age" and noted that "even China" supports sanctions. Of course the United States toadied to China just as it did to Iraq and similarly ignored the most horrific human rights abuses until the press chose to make a big thing of Tiananmen.

Saddam Hussein could muster a good case for a pre-invasion inference that the United States would not be unduly affronted at his descent into Kuwait. Washington secretly approved Iraq's attack on Iran in 1980. Realistic politician that he is, Saddam probably reckoned that Bush would take the invasion and inevitable surge in oil prices as a boon to his cronies in the oil patch. A secret deal over the fate of the fifteen Shiite prisoners held by the Emir could have prompted the release of some U.S. hostages, thus improving the Republicans' standing in the midterm elections.

Tin Pot, Oil Pot, Gold Pot

On August 5 *The Washington Post* said that "in military terms, the Iraqi invasion is little more than a particularly

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

vicious mugging of a rich little old lady who has been openly stalked and taunted by the neighborhood bully for months while everyone else looked the other way." Saddam no doubt reckoned that Kuwait's $100 billion in overseas assets, including a big chunk of British Petroleum and much real estate around the world, would be frozen, but he probably thought he would be able to lay his hands on some useful cash reserves in Kuwait's Central Bank. The bank was one of the first buildings the Iraqi troops made for. But even in those predawn hours the Emir's bureaucracy was sufficiently alert to hit the necessary computer keys and shift the bank's reserves to Bahrain. Gone are the days when fugitive royalty has to pile its gold on top of a taxi, as did King Zog of Albania on the eve of World War II.

It's hard to feel much sympathy for Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait. As creatures of the British and the Americans he and his forebears have had a pretty good run for their money. The day after the invasion *The Independent* in Britain ran an entertaining photograph of the viceroy Lord Curzon being carried ashore on the shoulders of a trooper to be greeted respectfully by one of Jaber's ancestors. Most Arabs in the region would regard this picture as emblematic of the role of such kingdoms as Kuwait.

It is now common to say, as *The New York Times* did on August 3, that the Emir had been running the country in "the old-fashioned tribal way, with a benevolent paternalism." Kuwait has some 2 million inhabitants, of whom 535,000 are citizens. Of these less than 60,000 voted in Kuwait's limited parliamentary elections, the last of which was held in 1985. For the past four years the Emir ruled by decree, having suspended Parliament. "The truth is that only the al-Sabah family and the Bedouin tribes liked the al-Sabahs," said a Kuwaiti quoted in the London *Times* of August 6. "Particularly in the past two years when the members of the former parliament and other respected critics of the emir were arrested and beaten up because they wanted a new parliament, even middle-class Kuwaitis were alienated. And it's all the fault of the emir himself. He despised everyone who wasn't a Sabah or a Bedou."

As Fred Halliday writes in his 1974 book *Arabia Without Sultans*, "Behind the official propaganda about 'miracles' and a Gulf El Dorado, [Kuwait] was a viciously reactionary state. . . . In 1971, for example, it was calculated that 90 per cent of all Kuwaiti investment abroad was controlled by a mere eighteen families." By 1970 about 80 percent of the labor force was made up of immigrants from Iraq, Iran, Oman, the Yemens, Pakistan and India. These were granted none of the benefits of the welfare state. There was an upper limit of 10 percent on the number of immigrants allowed to attend school, and "from the middle 1960s private doctors reaped enormous profits from the deprivation of the immigrant working class. In housing there was similar discrimination; foreigners were not allowed to own houses, and migrant workers were not provided with proper housing. The result was that Kuwaitis often rented their government-given houses at exorbitant rates to those foreigners who could pay; while the poor lived in shanty towns which the Kuwait city authorities ensured were placed away from main arterial roads and the sight of possible observers. . . . Non-Kuwaitis were excluded from trade unions: they were not allowed to join Kuwaiti unions, nor were they allowed to form their own."

In the London *Guardian* for August 3 the British journalist David Hirst concluded a long and unsparing attack on Saddam's invasion with these paragraphs:

> A report from Jordan suggests that ordinary people support Saddam; that they are jubilant even. . . . What stake does the Arab man in the street really have in a persisting Arab order which, they always used to be told, should have been swept away long ago? The new era which the Arab world has entered with Saddam's invasion of Kuwait could hardly be worse than the last. In the Arab people's state of mind, any change might seem more appealing than none at all—even if it requires a Saddam to wreak it.

What could a Mubarak argue to Saddam on behalf of the path of moderation embarked upon by Sadat with the famous "peace process"? When Israel invaded Lebanon, after a P.L.O. cease-fire on Israel's northern border lasting more than a year, what was the best that could be conjured out of the U.N. Security Council? A resolution condemning both sides, and even that was vetoed by the United States. What can King Hussein argue to Assad, even as Russian Jews pour into Israel and East Jerusalem and Israeli Cabinet members openly recommend the expelling of Palestinians by the hundreds of thousands into Jordan? As Edward Said summed up the situation to me last week:

> It goes without saying that Saddam is a monster, but we should add that he is a creature of recent Middle Eastern politics, presided over by the U.S. After all, the U.S. gave Israel a green light to invade Lebanon in 1982 and has condoned the occupation by Israel of lands of four Arab countries since 1967. At the U.N. the U.S. has supported Israel more or less unconditionally whereas it has treated its so-called "moderate" Arab friends essentially as oil suppliers and stooges. To Americans an Arab can either be a stooge or a terrorist, nothing else. Where are the rewards for "moderation"; for Saudi Arabia, for Kuwait, for Egypt, for Arafat? In the case of the first two, they are forced by the U.S. to oversupply oil at relatively cheap prices and, along with Egypt, humiliated when they come to buy arms at extortionary prices. They are rewarded with no changes in the U.S. position on Israel.

This logic ends with the brutal figure of Saddam. Saddam as Hitler? It's all the rage to say so, but one should be cautious amid these extravaganzas of commination. Saddam is a tyrant with gruesome abuses of civilized behavior on his record. In this he is egregious but not singular. A nation whose agents handed death lists of Communists and "subversives" to the Indonesian generals in 1965, murdered millions in Indochina and sponsored deaths by the hundreds of thousands in Latin America should use the name Hitler with restraint and with self-knowledge.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Falcon Air Force Base, Colorado Springs

I've been to some grotesque places in my time, and in some weird company too, but choppering into the so-called National Test Facility of the Strategic Defense Initiative in the entourage of Margaret Thatcher hits a high note in both registers. Here in the middle of one of the most beautiful states in the Union is a hideous cluster of pinkish concrete blockhouses, looking less like a place of research and inquiry than it is possible to imagine, and more like an extermination center than it is proper to think. Immaculate, sparkling lawns between the immense windowless sheds have the effect of heightening rather than diminishing the bleakness.

Within, the buildings disclose themselves as uniform cell-blocks, with bare tunnels and droning elevator shafts connecting one with another. This is the world of the pseudoscientist and the depraved technician; the no-smoking world of the security clearance and the magnetic tag; health-conscious, conformist and pious. There are perhaps two blacks. Talk to workers in the ghastly lunchroom and they speak robotically about a job that helps them "define their goals" or "address their needs." But then, as with Swift's futile grand Academy of Lagado, where the scientists spent profitless days trying to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, there is bound to be a certain deliquescence in language.

How right it is that the Star Wars program should be a particular pet project of J. Danforth Quayle, who has employed his innocuous-sounding position as head of the National Space Council to press for ever more funding and to provide political cover. Here, apparently qualified men and women, and serious scientific resources, are being devoted to the quixotic proposition that a bullet can be stopped by a bullet, and the outright deranged proposition that the best time to disarm an intercontinental ballistic missile is after, not before, it has been launched from its silo.

In a heartening tribute to the new relaxation in Soviet-American relations, all the diagrams of the "directed energy system" still show the "boost phase" of the target missiles occurring in the Soviet Union. In a pep talk delivered at delirious speed to distract from the haywire mess of non sequiturs and false assumptions that constitute its core, some colonel says that of course things are better these days but don't forget vigilance and let's remember spinoffs in laser surgery and anyway what about Third World desperadoes getting the bomb? (Laser surgery doesn't need a doomsday program to generate research, and any loony with a nuke, assuming he didn't get his technology by "spinoff" from American outfits like this one—as most candidates, including Saddam Hussein, have so far—will be able to deliver it via a suitcase or car-bomb anyway.)

Closer inspection of "the facility" shows it to be a sort of bazaar for the military-industrial complex. A huge hall is filled with stalls, one for McDonnell Douglas, one for Boeing, one for Rockwell, for Grumman, for Honeywell and so on. The stalls are manned by the most shifty-looking vendors, all of them half-embarrassed by the Rube Goldberg schemes they are hawking. "Brilliant Pebbles" (a laughable variant on the original oxymoron of "Smart Rocks") is my personal favorite. It involves a meter-length piece of orbiting trash, with a supposed "sensor" that on the great day will propel it with train-wreck force into the path of an oncoming ICBM. The plan to seed the heavens with thousands of these babies makes the extraction of sunbeams from cucumbers look like a pursuit for the harmless inmates of the day room of the institution, as opposed to something dreamed up in the raging craniums of the hopeless cases in maximum security.

Thatcher, of course, adores all this military and technological rigmarole, which gives her yet another chance to make like a chap and reminisce about the times she has sent boys off to fight. She is also here because Britain has taken well over 100 S.D.I. contracts for junk weaponry, more than Israel and West Germany combined and a grand reinforcement of the "special relationship."

Debra Rosenthal, in her excellent new book *At the Heart of the Bomb*, tells the story of David Lorge Parnas, an otherwise conformist computer expert who resigned from the Star Wars panel at Sandia National Laboratories when it hit him that the whole enterprise was a dangerous fraud. In an exchange with more credulous colleagues Parnas successfully defended his contention that it was impossible to be sure that the proposed computer codes (comprising perhaps 100 million lines of instructions) could ever control the hardware under battle conditions. Furthermore, there was no scientific way of testing the computer brain. And "if the first real use has to be successful," said Parnas, "you can't do it." No real-world general or President will sit and wait under an untested umbrella if an actual attack is reported or detected. It's out of the silos with "our" missiles, just as before.

A figure named Henry Cooper, the new director of S.D.I., tried to worm his way past this obvious truth while addressing the massed workers in Thatcher's company. Fawning on her, he dwelt on the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain. That great struggle, he intoned, could not have been won without radar; this only goes to show the importance of the technological lead. The atmosphere of hallucination was by this time so thick that it would have done no good to point out that radar worked, could be tested and was not usable as a first-strike weapon. Nor was it a pork barrel for a flock of scavenger contractors.

Eagerly picking up her cue, Thatcher swung into a boiler-plate rant of the sub-Churchillian sort that most gratifies her. Totalitarianism defeated by pluck and resolve . . . the bull-dog breed . . . peace through strength—the whole ration. She was just approaching her peroration with a labored pun about the brilliant pebbles of information she had picked up on her visit when—*pffft*—the whole public address system went dead. There was a stupid giggling in the ranks. The nerve center of American high-tech had failed in the simple task of firing a broadside of Tory platitude from one side of a hangar to another.

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A Toast

EDWARD SOREL

I WAS CERTAIN THAT WASHINGTON WOULD KEEP FUNDING THE STEALTH BOMBER...
...THAT CONGRESS WOULD SINK A FEW MORE BILLION INTO STAR WARS...
...AND THEN START BUILDING "HOME PORTS" EVERYWHERE FOR A NEW NUCLEAR NAVY.
IT SEEMED INEVITABLE THAT THE WHITE HOUSE WOULD GET THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX CUT DRASTICALLY...
...YET SOMEHOW FIND FUNDS TO BUILD PLANTS THAT WOULD PRODUCE NERVE GAS...
BUT THAT WAS BEFORE THE SAVINGS AND LOAN BANKS COLLAPSED... NOW EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED...
THANKS TO THESE S & L CROOKS, WASHINGTON HAS TO COME UP WITH $500 BILLION, WHICH WON'T LEAVE THEM ANY MONEY FOR THEIR IDIOTIC PROJECTS
TO THE S & L SLEAZOIDS WHO KILLED THE PROGRAMS THAT WE LEFTIES NEVER COULD HAVE STOPPED- AND IN PARTICULAR...
TO NEIL BUSH,
EDWARD SOREL

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ARTICLES.

ASBESTOS BY ANOTHER NAME

Death in the Sandbox

DAVID CORN

William Kitchen is obsessed with a particularly unsettling image: thousands of children playing in sandboxes that could be deadly. One evening in 1987 Kitchen, a 37-year-old construction worker and head of the school board in Johnstown, a small town in upstate New York, attended an open house at the Jansen Avenue elementary school. While walking down a corridor, Kitchen passed a classroom full of what looked like smoke. He peered in and saw no fire, just a boy in a sandbox in the corner of the room. Every time the child shoveled some sand into a pail, a cloud of white dust rose up. The room was covered with this fine white dust, and the first thing that came to Kitchen's mind was asbestos. "I immediately dismissed that," he recalls. "There's no way in this day and age in children's play sand that there can be asbestos."

Kitchen was wrong. A few weeks later he came across a newspaper article reporting that Dr. Jerrold Abraham, a pathologist at the State University of New York in Syracuse, had discovered asbestos fibers in the same type of sand present in the classroom. Kitchen sent Abraham a sample of the dust he had found, and Abraham detected asbestos fibers in it as well. Shortly before this, Dr. Mark Germine, a New Jersey geologist and physician, had found tremolite asbestos in Kiddies Fun Sand, which was made from crushed limestone. Most play sand comes from quarries, not beaches; tremolite is a mineral present at some quarries and mines. Germine petitioned the Consumer Product Safety Commission to ban products that are more than .01 percent tremolite, including certain play sands, consumer gravel, and lawn and garden limestone. There was a burst of media alerts. Could play sand really be a health threat? It was up to the commission to decide.

Kitchen expected the agency to protect kids. Asbestos is a carcinogen that causes asbestosis and other serious diseases. And how important is the play sand market? But Kitchen didn't realize that he was about to become part of a larger controversy, in which big bucks are at stake. He would also discover that in Washington the regulatory process is highly intricate and legalistic, charged with politics, confounded with conflicting and complicated science, influenced by corporations, and quite capable of overlooking health and safety risks to thousands, maybe millions, of citizens—in the case of play sand, to children.

The commission said play sand was safe. In 1987 it paid outside consultants to test samples of certain brands of play sand. One study found tremolite asbestos fibers in the sand. Another study also detected tremolite but maintained these fibers were only "cleavage fragments"—small chips created during the mining and milling process—of a supposedly non-asbestos form of tremolite. (Asbestos is not a specific mineral but rather a collective term given to a group of similar minerals that share certain traits.) Relying on the second set of findings, the commission in 1988 concluded there was no asbestos in play sand and, thus, no reason to regulate.

Kitchen could hardly believe it. The manufacturers of the two brands of sand found to contain asbestos by Abraham and Germine voluntarily pulled their products off the market. But children still could be kicking up dust in sandboxes full of the material; as late as last fall Kitchen bought a bag of one of these brands, which had been renamed and which carried, on the back in small print, the warning "Do not breathe dust. Prolonged inhalation of excessive dust may be harmful to the lungs." Moreover, there is no regulation to prevent the marketing of other brands that might be tainted. These possibilities have spurred Kitchen, a former organizer for Acorn and the National Welfare Rights Organization, to wage a one-man crusade against the Consumer Product Safety Commission. This campaign has cost him tens of thousands of dollars for photocopying, travel and telephone bills, and in deferred income, as he has chased after politicians and journalists, hoping someone will challenge the commission. And he has found himself confronting large corporate interests—such as companies that mine talc and produce crushed stone, both of which can contain tremolite—for which the commission's decision was quite profitable.

Those businesses have been fighting to remove certain forms of three asbestos-like minerals—tremolite, anthophyllite and actinolite, collectively known as AT&A—from the tough asbestos standard established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in 1972. A leader in this effort is R.T. Vanderbilt, a Connecticut-based firm that mines and produces tremolitic talc, which is used in a host of manufacturing processes, for tires, paint, plastic, ceramics and shingles. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health found a high incidence of asbestos-related diseases, including lung cancer, among talc miners and millers working at a Vanderbilt facility in upstate New York. A group of talc miners and miners' widows is now suing Vanderbilt and other firms for nearly $200 million, claiming that miners contracted asbestosis while working the mines. But the company, challenging the NIOSH findings, maintains its workers have not contracted asbestos-related diseases and that its products should not be regulated as tightly as asbestos.

The essence of the company's case against regulation, and that of its industry allies, lies in the same semantic argument adopted by the Consumer Product Safety Commission regarding play sand: respirable AT&A fibers can come from two types of minerals, asbestiform and non-asbestiform. That is, AT&A minerals grow in two different ways: as fibers

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(asbestiform) or as broader chunks (non-asbestiform). But particles of the non-asbestiform variety, when mined or milled, can break up into microscopic pieces that are fiber-shaped. Such non-asbestiform AT&A fibers, the industry argument goes, are not really asbestos; therefore, they need not be controlled as strictly. Yet in other key physical characteristics these non-asbestiform fibers are strikingly similar to the asbestiform fibers that cause asbestosis and other lung diseases.

"This non-asbestiform business is just a word game," says Dr. Philip Landrigan, a professor of environmental medicine and pediatrics at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York City and a harsh critic of the commission's ruling on play sand. "The people trying to protect a particular product will come up with sophisticated arguments about when a fiber is not a fiber. To the public health people, the science is straightforward."

Much is at stake for R.T. Vanderbilt, which says that its talc contains only non-asbestiform tremolite and anthophyllite, and other businesses that make products with AT&A. An internal 1988 Vanderbilt memorandum noted, "The prospect of labelling our products as asbestos . . . would lead to a rapid loss of our business." Much is also at stake for employees. According to NIOSH, more than 1 million workers at 67,678 sites might be exposed to talc, tremolite and anthophyllite.

The talc and crushed stone industries have battled OSHA's attempt to apply the asbestos standard to non-asbestiform AT&A for years. For most of that time, they had little success, as OSHA based its decisions on studies that suggest that AT&A fibers—even if they have a non-asbestiform origin—may cause asbestos-related disease. A desperate Vanderbilt, according to a letter written to OSHA by NIOSH director Dr. J. Donald Miller, even tried to influence a NIOSH study on the mortality of talc miners at its facility.

After OSHA in 1983 proposed to lower the permissible exposure level of asbestos, including non-asbestiform AT&A, the company mounted an aggressive lobbying campaign aimed at both the Labor Department and the Office of Management and Budget. (One lobbyist was Michelle Laxalt, daughter of then-Senator Paul Laxalt.) When OSHA would not back down, Vanderbilt, the National Stone Association and the Vulcan Materials Company took the matter to federal court. OSHA gave in and granted a stay on implementing the standard as it applies to non-asbestiform AT&A; it also agreed to reconsider its regulation of those substances under the asbestos standard.

Last February, following years of internal review, OSHA proposed to remove non-asbestiform AT&A from the asbestos standard. In May it held five days of public hearings in a small auditorium in the Washington headquarters of the Labor Department, at which any interested party could comment on the proposal. Bill Kitchen was one such party. He drove down in his pickup truck to testify. He figured that if OSHA blessed the industry's attempt to deregulate non-asbestiform AT&A, then the Consumer Product Safety Commission ruling on play sand would be validated. But if OSHA beat back industry's push, then the commission's lack of action on play sand would seem even odder.

As an outraged citizen, Kitchen was a distinct minority in the lineup of high-priced lawyers, officials of affected businesses, doctors, public health officials, and industry-hired mineralogists. Vanderbilt, the American Mining Congress, the National Aggregates Association, the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association and the National Stone Association, the last representing 400 companies with 64,000 employees, staged a full-court press. Lawyers from blue-chip D.C. firms introduced a number of scientists and experts who presented a barrage of technical information to justify the industry contention that these minerals should not be included in the asbestos standard. The most articulate industry advocates were mineralogists, not medical experts. These included Art Langer, a geologist and mineralogist at Brooklyn College. It was upon Langer's report that the Consumer Product Safety Commission had relied to certify play sand as safe for kids. Last year Vanderbilt gave Langer $77,000 to study the "biological potential" of asbestiform and non-asbestiform minerals.

At the hearing the business groups argued there is no solid evidence that exposure to non-asbestiform minerals presents a significant threat. They complained about the cost of regulation. William Miller, chief of regulatory projects coordination at the Bureau of Mines, laid out industry's nightmare. If the regulation is not removed, he said, the talc industry could lose $12 million in sales, one major talc producer would be put out of business and 7 percent of crushed-stone producers might have to close their doors. Anxious about an OSHA statement indicating it might regulate these minerals under a separate rule—which, if established, probably would not be as tough as the asbestos standard—an official of the National Stone Association declared, "N.S.A. does not believe OSHA would be justi-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ED KOREN

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fied in regulating non-asbestiform AT&A minerals in any environment under any circumstances."

For someone unversed in the fine points of mineralogy and pathology, it would be easy to get lost in the swirl of scientific technicalities. But a distinct pattern emerged at the hearing: The medical experts who were not in the pay of industry dismissed out of hand the argument that non-asbestiform AT&A should be removed from the asbestos standard. Dr. Richard Lemen, assistant director of NIOSH, testified that doing so would pose "serious health risks for exposed workers" and that cleavage fragments of these minerals "should be considered as hazardous as fibers from the asbestiform minerals." After the hearing Lemen explained, "The bottom line is that all fibers, if they are breathable and are durable within the lung [meaning they don't dissolve], have the potential of causing disease. We don't feel it matters where a fiber is born."

Testing is not scheduled to be completed until 1995. Meanwhile, if you call the Consumer Product Safety Commission's 800 hotline, a calm-sounding voice will tell you that the commission 'has found no evidence of an asbestos hazard in play sand.'

Dr. Abraham, the pathologist who discovered tremolite asbestos in play sand and who specializes in occupational lung disease, had many angry words. He has studied lung samples from a few hundred diseased talc miners who worked in upstate New York sites, including that of R.T. Vanderbilt, and has discovered a high number of cases of asbestosis and mesothelioma, a very rare and highly lethal lung cancer. Abraham had nothing but contempt for the industry's argument: "The miners are inhaling fibers that are resulting in disease that's indistinguishable from asbestos-related disease, and I don't really care—if I can use that word—whether you call them asbestos or non-asbestos." Abraham, like Lemen before him, could just as easily have been speaking about tremolite in play sand.

The American Thoracic Society, part of the American Lung Association, noted in a recent report submitted to OSHA that tremolite is a carcinogen and can produce mesothelioma. The study found that tremolite's carcinogenesis is "related to fiber size, shape and durability, rather than to chemical composition." The society furthermore advised, "The prudent public health policy course is to regard appropriately sized tremolite 'fibers' . . . as capable of producing the recognized asbestos-related disease, and they should be regulated accordingly."

After sitting through four days of hearings and hours of industry arguments, Bill Kitchen was a bit agitated. When he had questioned witnesses, as anyone is allowed to do at such hearings, Judge George Fath cut him off if he raised the subject of play sand, explaining that the topic was not pertinent to OSHA's rule-making on AT&A. On the final day, he had his own chance to testify. Kitchen has learned the science. He cited a number of relevant academic studies. But he also engaged in some very plain talk: "Should we . . . be listening to the mineralogists or be listening to the medical experts, particularly when a number of mineralogists have very strong financial ties to the companies that are going to be regulated under these standards?" Fath did not at this point prevent him from referring to play sand, so Kitchen warned, "If this proposal goes through as it is, that play sand can continue to be marketed, presenting a terrible risk to very young children."

Even OSHA, in its sixteen-page, fine-print notice of its proposed rule change, published in the Federal Register, acknowledged that studies indicate there is a potential health threat from workplace exposure to non-asbestiform AT&A and rejected the claim that the mineralogical origins of fibers are related to their health effects. But OSHA still maintained the available evidence is not sufficient for it to regulate non-asbestiform AT&A under the asbestos standard. To do so there must be "substantial evidence" of a "significant risk"—a criterion that leaves much to OSHA's discretion. To participants on both sides of the debate, though, the message of the notice is clear: The mid-level professionals at OSHA, who crammed the notice with information about the risks of non-asbestiform AT&A, believe the standard should remain in place; the political appointees who make the final policy decisions are sympathetic to the cries of business.

One statement in the notice was especially startling: "OSHA believes that CPSC's conclusion [regarding play sand] that there is no evidence of a carcinogenic hazard did not give adequate consideration to the relevant evidence and is overstated." It's a comment that fully justifies Kitchen's zealotry. Its meaning is obvious. No one should take comfort in the Consumer Product Safety Commission's judgment on play sand.

OSHA will now spend at least a year deciding what to do about non-asbestiform AT&A. The consumer safety commission is keeping a close watch on OSHA's actions, according to an internal memorandum. It has also proposed that these substances be tested in animals to see if non-asbestiform fibers are hazardous. That testing is not scheduled to be completed until 1995. In the meantime, if you call the commission's 800 hotline and request information on play sand, a recording of a calm-sounding woman will tell you that the commission "has found no evidence of an asbestos hazard from play sand."

Ultimately, the question in the cases of both play sand and AT&A—as with most regulation—is, Who must bear the

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burden of uncertainty, the companies that make the products, or the workers and consumers who suffer if the dire predictions come true? For decades, industry and government disregarded the dangers of asbestos, often with the familiar excuse that the evidence was not conclusive.

"Shouldn't the public health officials and what they say be given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to the health of children or mine workers?" Kitchen asks. Regulation is a complicated business, but the principle of erring in the direction of safety should be the rule, especially when the enemy is a debilitating disease that can take decades to develop. Waiting for proof beyond any doubt is akin to experimenting on humans. The law even allows OSHA to err "on the side of overprotection rather than underprotection." But that's not a privilege OSHA or the Consumer Product Safety Commission seems willing to use in these cases. At one point in the hearings, Judge Fath interrupted Kitchen, saying, "Well, Mr. Kitchen, you don't understand that one of the courses taught in law school is how to complicate things." After years of struggling—so far, unsuccessfully—for no more than simple prudence, Kitchen replied sadly, "No, I think I do understand." □

AT THE KHMER ROUGE SCHOOL

The Teachings of Chairman Pot

ROGER NORMAND

In a heavily guarded villa in southern Thailand, 150 to 200 students gather several times a year to absorb the doctrines of their teacher. Reviled by most of the outside world, the teacher is loved by his students. They marvel at his ability to deliver lengthy, coherent lectures without notes; they are awed by his deep understanding of the political and historical forces that have shaped their reality; some weep openly during his more stirring speeches.

The teacher is Pol Pot. His students are elite Khmer Rouge (K.R.) cadres, from battalion up to division commanders. During an Asia Watch fact-finding mission to the refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border last January 1, I interviewed several of Pol Pot's former student-commanders. They were living in camps controlled by the two non-Communist resistance factions (N.C.R.), which share Cambodia's seat in the United Nations as partners in an uneasy coalition with the Khmer Rouge. Having fled the Khmer Rouge as a result of internal power struggles, they still remained loyal to Pol Pot. Eager to teach an interested student, they provided details of the structure and policies of the K.R. leadership, down to entire speeches that they had memorized.

Roger Normand, fieldwork editor of The Harvard Human Rights Journal, *is a student at Harvard Law and Divinity schools.*

From these interviews, a picture of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge emerges that does not fit the standard Western image of an unstable demagogue leading an army of killing machines who are universally rejected by the people of Cambodia. Rather, one sees a disciplined, devoted and efficient political/military movement, guided by a highly educated and politically savvy leadership, under the unquestioned control of a charismatic ruler, and commanding the support—both voluntary and coerced—of a significant portion of the population.

Pol Pot is often joined at the head of the class by Son Sen, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ta Mok, the very same leaders who presided over the "killing fields" from 1975 to 1978. The villa, called Zone 87 ("87" is one of Pol Pot's aliases), sits in Thailand's Trat province, close to the Cambodian border and to K.R.-controlled refugee camps. These camps supply the disciplined, battle-hardened guerrillas who make up the 35,000-40,000-strong K.R. army. Since the Vietnamese withdrew their troops from Cambodia last September, the Khmer Rouge has made rapid gains against the inexperienced soldiers of the State of Cambodia, installed by Vietnam following its 1978 invasion of Cambodia. In recent months even the urban centers of Phnom Penh and Battambang have suffered sporadic guerrilla attacks.

At Zone 87, Pol Pot expounds a well-planned strategy of guerrilla warfare aimed at wresting political control of the countryside from an increasingly corrupt and divided administration. Military policy is subordinated to this strategy; battlefield commanders apply sufficient pressure on the cities to tie down the Phnom Penh army while committing the bulk of their soldiers to "liberating" rural Cambodia. Control is not measured by physical occupation but by the guerrillas' ability to infiltrate and rule by night. Pol Pot admonishes overzealous commanders to engage only in "mini-battlefields," reminding them that "the cities will follow the countryside." The goal, he explains to the students, is to "invalidate existing state authority" and hasten the disintegration of the government, which he estimates can survive no longer than eighteen months after the Vietnamese troop withdrawal.

The Khmer Rouge does not depend solely on shooting its way into Phnom Penh as it did on April 17, 1975. Rather, it now relies on international diplomacy and negotiations in conjunction with guerrilla warfare. Pol Pot correctly anticipated that as his guerrillas moved closer to Phnom Penh, a nervous international community would step up the pressure to find a political solution. Accordingly, he has taught his commanders that although a military solution is preferable, they should concentrate on political warfare to accomplish their goals. Thus, Washington's new policy—to withdraw diplomatic support for the K.R.-dominated coalition and enter into a dialogue with Vietnam in order to prevent a K.R. return to power—may change nothing. By continuing to insist on elections in the context of a "comprehensive settlement" that includes all four factions, the Bush Administration gives Pol Pot the two things he desperately needs: more time and an internationally sanctioned mechanism by which to return to power.

But Pol Pot warns of the danger of accepting a political

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settlement before his political cadres have sufficiently "prepared" the country. The delicate task of delaying elections until "the right time" falls to Khieu Samphan, the K.R. front man in the party's negotiations. He occasionally stops by Zone 87 to explain his diplomatic mission to the commanders: "I am so busy that I have no time to eat, because the outside world keeps demanding a political end to the war in Kampuchea. I could end the war right now if I wanted, because the outside world is waiting for me, but I am buying time in order to give you comrades the opportunity to carry out all the tasks."

The tasks have been carried out with urgency since early 1988, when Pol Pot counseled his students to accelerate political warfare. Since then, small cells of highly trained cadres have infiltrated hundreds of villages throughout Cambodia. Pol Pot instructs them to use "the weapon of their mouths" to build networks of support among village chiefs and family heads. He has forbidden use of the word "communism"; instead, cadres stress the paramount role of the Cambodian peasantry as the source of the strength, virtue and morality of the nation, while encouraging what Pol Pot terms "the national anger" over the effects of the Vietnamese occupation. By the time elections are held, the Khmer Rouge plans to have important cadres positioned throughout the country to "lead the balloting work."

While all the Cambodian factions engage in political warfare, the K.R.'s emphasis on education and indoctrination sets it apart. At Zone 87, commanders study from 6 A.M. to 9 P.M. for thirteen days, then return to the front and instruct their troops. Each soldier is expected to memorize the basic doctrines and teach them to villagers at every opportunity. As one moves down the hierarchy of organizational power, the lessons become less specific and less complex, until at the village level the teachings are concerned with general principles of nation, morality and society. The result of this system of indoctrination is a disciplined, loyal and effective movement, with no room for dissent.

Pol Pot usually devotes a full day of classes to the political and social ramifications of the tripartite coalition with the N.C.R. He teaches that the K.R. joined the coalition in order to reap political gains inside Cambodia and diplomatic gains abroad, despite the risk to its purity from contact with "capitalist and feudalist elements." Pol Pot explains further how political circumstances have induced the movement to adopt a moderate, liberal policy in order to placate foreign critics. However, he admonishes the students to maintain their "true nature" and live by the saying, "The politics have changed but the spirit remains the same."

Moreover, Pol Pot assures his students that, although many high-level diplomatic posts are filled by N.C.R. officials, the Khmer Rouge remains the dominant force in the coalition: "[Prince Norodom] Sihanouk [the titular President] is like the peel of an orange, but we are the fruit. Sihanouk and the outside world do not fully comprehend this, but you comrades must not doubt our role as the true leaders of the national liberation struggle."

During his lessons, Pol Pot strides up and down the aisles crowded with students, peppering them with questions in the same Socratic style as a Harvard law professor. When a

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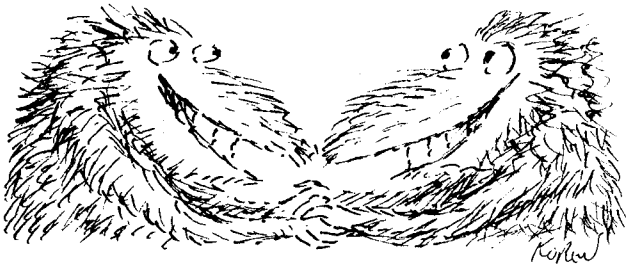

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nervous student stumbles over his responses, Pol Pot good-naturedly teases him, or stands behind him, patting his shoulder with encouragement. In March 1988, while teaching about the domestic situation inside Cambodia, he abruptly stopped the lesson and asked, "What can we do to make the people love us?" Several division and brigade commanders suggested exposing the corruption of other factions and demonstrating the K.R.'s patriotism; others maintained that the key was economics—they had to organize the peasants to increase rice production. Pol Pot kept shaking his head, dissatisfied. Then a battalion commander in the back row raised his hand and responded, "We must put ourselves in the same position as the poorest of the poor, then the people will crowd around us and love us." "Yes," cried the teacher, delighted that one of the lowest-ranking students had answered correctly. "Yes! Yes!"

Of course, it is no easy task to erase from historical memory the million or so victims of what Chinese diplomats call "past excesses." At Zone 87, Pol Pot explains the proper strategy: "We must focus attention on the Vietnamese aggression and divert attention from our past mistakes." At least until the recent U.S. policy shift, this strategy worked brilliantly in international diplomacy, where Khieu Samphan, supported by a coalition led by China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and the United States, has successfully deleted reference to past genocide in nearly all the documents and resolutions issued by the U.N. and the various international peace conferences.

If many Cambodians hate the Khmer Rouge and some respect it, nearly all fear it.

In the classroom, Pol Pot blames Vietnamese agents ("Khmer bodies with Vietnamese heads") intent on sabotaging the revolution for most, but not all, of the killings. He asserts that the party ordered the liquidation of thousands of members of the political and military elites of the Khmer Republic in 1975 because they were "thoroughly tainted by imperialism." Furthermore, he concedes that some of his young followers were guilty of applying the doctrines too strictly, and warns the students not to repeat those "mistakes." One battalion commander received a stern lesson during a group self-criticism session after he confessed to routinely killing captured government officers. Standing alone in the midst of the crowded classroom, the man shook noticeably as Pol Pot yelled at him: "Each of those men has relatives throughout Kampuchea who will now seek vengeance against us. Already we have many enemies inside Kampuchea. By your actions, you have multiplied our enemies and lessened our friends!"

The Khmer Rouge has many enemies inside Cambodia. It is rare to find someone who cannot relate a personal horror story about life under Pol Pot. At the same time, many Cambodians harbor a deep-seated fear of national extinction, fueled by repeated invasions by their larger, more powerful neighbors. Having waged relentless guerrilla campaigns against both "U.S. imperialism" and "Vietnamese colonialism," the K.R. has earned a measure of respect and support.

It augments this support by pursuing tactics similar to its successful "hearts and minds" campaign against the U.S.-backed Khmer Republic from 1970 to 1975. As before, villagers report that polite Khmer Rouge guerrillas are paying premium prices for their rice, and helping them work the fields. In contrast, N.C.R. guerrillas, who lack the discipline and fanatical devotion of their K.R. counterparts, are often accused of stealing village supplies and occasionally of raping women. And the government's army is alienating villagers by commandeering rice and press-ganging youths into military service.

But if many Cambodians hate the Khmer Rouge and some respect it, nearly all fear it. The K.R. still has a reputation, and it's not all based on the past. Refugees and villagers report that K.R. guerrillas kill those village headmen and administrators unwilling to cooperate. Such drastic measures are rarely required, however, as most Cambodians retain vivid memories of the price of disobedience.

Fear, an important weapon in the Khmer Rouge arsenal, renders absurd the concept of free and fair elections in Cambodia, a country that has never held them. On the belief that entire villages are likely to vote with the village leaders, K.R. political cadres concentrate their "persuasion" on the headmen and elders. Yet the West has selected U.N.-supervised elections as the miracle cure for Cambodia's ills, expecting the sensible peasants to ride the recent tide of "democracy" and vote against the K.R. Thomas Pickering, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., has gone so far as to assert that no one in his or her right mind expects the K.R. to win an election. Yet *The New York Times* recently quoted a C.I.A. estimate that the K.R. commands the support of 30 percent of the population. It is entirely possible that the Khmer Rouge could achieve its return to power through elections conceived by the international community as a means to control the K.R. and end the bloodshed in Cambodia.

The Western propensity to demonize Pol Pot and his followers, after having tacitly supported them for almost twelve years, only serves to obscure the very real dangers facing 7 million Cambodians. For now, the Khmer Rouge has disavowed genocidal policies. Yet while they talk of coalitions and democracy in the U.N., Pol Pot's vision of an ethnically pure peasant society remains in the hearts and minds of his students at Zone 87.

And the preparations at Zone 87 continue. At the close of the final self-criticism session, Pol Pot delivers a speech that leaves even the most battle-hardened commanders in tears, vowing to struggle to their last drop of blood. "Comrades," he begins, "I am very regretful that you have not yet reached a high level of understanding. I worry that the other factions will gain power. So, although I am old and would like to retire, I must continue with all my strength to build up your knowledge. Do not underestimate yourselves, but also

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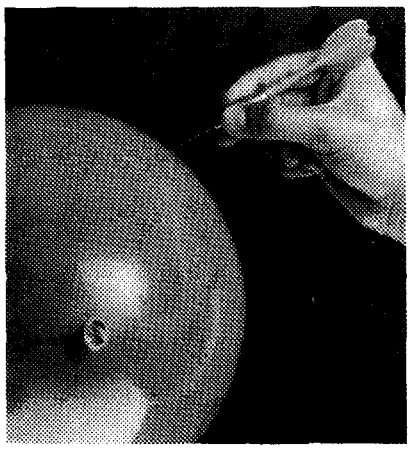

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guard against apathy and overconfidence. Everyone must work extra hard in the political area to reach a higher level than I myself have attained. If you fail in this regard, I will not die peacefully." □

Patriarchal State

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

single phrase Jefferson had upped the ante and made our Republic—in name at least—more human-scale than any other.

Eventually we freed ourselves from England, thanks to the French fleet. At the end of the struggle, there was George Washington and hardly anyone else except a group of ambitious lawyers, overexcited by the prospect of a new nation with new laws and a complex judiciary in need of powerful advocates and prosecutors and interpreters. Hence a most lawyerly Constitution that, in effect, excluded from citizenship women, slaves, Native Americans and the poor. The Constitution's famous checks and balances were designed to check the man who would be king while making certain that in the balance the people at large would have no weight at all. That is why, unlike most First World countries, the United States has elections rather than politics.

The second revolutionary note was struck in 1791. Although the Founding Fathers were, to a man, natural conservatives, there were enough Jefferson-minded pursuers of happiness among them to realize that so lawyerly a Republic would probably serve as a straitjacket for those of an energetic nature. So to insure the right of each to pursue happiness, the Bill of Rights was attached to the Constitution. In theory, henceforward no one need fear the tyranny of either the state or the majority.

Certain of our rights, such as freedom of speech, were said to be inalienable. But a significant minority has never accepted the idea of so much freedom for so many. That is why, from 1791 to the present day, the ongoing drama of our Republic has been the relentless attack of the prosperous few upon the rights of the restless many—often masked as the righteous will of the majority against the deviant few. The current Supreme Court is clearly dedicated to the removal or alienation of as many of our inalienable rights as possible, on the specious ground that what the founders did not spell out as a "right" was not a right at all but some sort of unpatriotic, un-American activity.

The result has been confusion, to put it mildly. The Fourteenth Amendment made it clear that those freedoms guaranteed to persons as citizens of the United States also applied to them as citizens of pure Utah or sex-sickened Georgia. But, so the argument goes, if the Constitution does not say that you may smoke marijuana, then any state may forbid you to smoke what a local majority thinks is bad for you. On the other hand, if the producers of death-enhancing consumer items have enough money, they can buy congresses, courts, presidents; they can also hire a consumer spokesperson like Jesse Helms to uphold the constitutional right of those who wish to pursue happiness and profits by making and selling cigarettes, which kill a half-million or so people a year, while forbidding, at huge expense, heroin, which kills in the pathetically low four figures. That neither tobacco nor heroin is good for people is agreed by all. But should either be outlawed in the sort of society that Jefferson designed for us? Finally, do we want a free society or a patriarchal one? My question is not rhetorical.

Patriarchal. From the Latin *pater*, father. As in father knows best. A patriot, then, is someone who serves the *father*land. The notion of the father as chief of chiefs is prehistoric. From this tribal conceit derives monotheism: the idea of a single god-creator who has created at least half of *us* in *his* image.

Although religion may be freely practiced in these parts, it was deliberately excluded from the political arrangements of our Republic. Unfortunately, the zealous few are always busy trying to make the many submit to their religious laws and superstitions. In the 1950s they won a great, and illegal, victory over the Constitution when they put the phrase "In God We Trust" on the currency.

Although the notion of one god may give comfort to those in need of a daddy, it reminds the rest of us that the totalitarian society is grounded upon the concept of God the father. One paternal god, one paternal leader. Authority is absolute. And error, as the Roman Catholic Church tells us, has no rights.

Each year it is discovered that when high school seniors are confronted blindly with the Bill of Rights, they neither like it nor approve of it. Our society has made them into true patriots, believers in a stern patriarchy where the police have every right to arrest you for just about anything that Dad disapproves of. The tragedy of the United States in this century is not the crackup of an empire, which we never knew what to do with in the first place, but the collapse of the idea of the citizen as someone autonomous whose private life is not subject to orders from above. Today, hundreds of thousands of Americans are only marginally free as they undergo mandatory blood tests, urine tests, lie detector tests. Speech is theoretically free but the true pulpit, electronic or print, is pretty much denied anyone who does not support the patriarchal state in all its misdeeds. It is no wonder that two-thirds of citizens under 40 have no interest in public affairs. They know they are not participants in the governance of the country. They are, simply, administrative units.

I would put the time and place of our fall as the White House in 1950. Harry Truman and his advisers decided that it would be a good idea to keep the United States on a full wartime basis even though there was no enemy on earth who could challenge us militarily or economically. Therefore an enemy had to be invented. The dictator Stalin fit the bill. So did atheistic *and* godless communism as a rival religion. But, said a Republican senator to Truman, if you really want to waste all that money on the military, you're going to have to scare the hell out of the American people. With a lot of help from Congress and from the likes of Henry Luce, Truman did just that.

Gore Vidal is the president of the Venice Film Festival for 1990.

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Out of fairness to our inadvertent totalitarians, there was an urgent economic motive in 1950. We had made our recovery from the Depression of the 1930s *only* when the war put everyone to work. After the war, rather than run the terrible risk of a free economy in which General Motors would have to make something people wanted, like a car, we decided to take all the revenue—two-thirds anyway—of the federal government and put it into armaments.

The second reason for our garrison state is obvious: profit. There is a third reason, but I don't think most people in 1950 were aware of its consequences. A state forever at war, hot or cold, is easily controlled by the few, unlike a relatively free society, in which the governors are accountable to the people at large and to law. Today the neglected, ignored people have got the point; half the electorate refuses to vote in presidential elections. After all, was there any difference between Dukakis and Bush? Admittedly, Dukakis did not seem to mind too much if Kitty was raped by black prisoners on furlough, while Bush thought the flag was just grand, even if it was made in Taiwan. This was all good fun of the kind our rulers, who gave us prime-time television, think the idiots—us—will lap up. But then it is their job to divert public attention from the great corruption of the Pentagon and S&Ls and toxic waste. In the end there was a difference between the two: Dukakis wanted to increase the Pentagon budget by $4 billion, Bush by $11 billion. This being the extent of disagreement between the parties, it is clear that neither is an instrument by which the people might assert themselves and make known their will. As for a third party, we tried that in 1972. The People's Party. Unfortunately we hadn't realized that to have a third party you must have two other parties. We also found out that political parties, as opposed to spontaneous movements, are not possible in an oligarchy as entrenched as the one that rules us.

The small group that pays for the presidents and the congresses maintains its grip on the country through the media and the schools. After all, if people hadn't bought the idea that Noriega was the number one drug-dispenser, Panama could not have been illegally invaded so that Bush might not seem a wimp. Thousands of Panamanians died, as well as twenty-three American servicemen (nine of them killed by other Americans), for no purpose other than shoring up the image of the oligarchs' current spokesman, George Bush. Since the reading skills of the American people are the lowest in the First World, the general public is always easy prey to manipulation by television. This means that if you want to demonize drugs or the Arabs or the Japanese, you do so openly in the media. You also do it subliminally. As a result, in the past two years drugs was pushed from tenth to first place as a national worry. Now that communism has ceased to be the unholy devil, drug dealers, and users, are the enemy. Aircraft carriers are needed off the coast of Colombia to intercept drug exporters. And so two-thirds of the true budget will continue to go to the government in its latest "war"—a war that will not be won because no one has any interest in winning it, as opposed to expensively prosecuting it. The oligarchy does not care whether the citizens make themselves sick with drugs or not. What government wants is simple: total control. If this can be got by dispensing with the Bill of Rights, then that's a small price to pay. The whole tone of the Reagan-Bush management is one of open hostility to our ancient rights in particular and to the people in general. Today the poor, as Mr. Bush might put it, are in deep doo-doo. The rich are fed up with the poor. And if the poor don't shape up, the rich just aren't going to take it anymore.

The problem is money: who has it, who spends it and who gets what for what he paid. When it costs $40 million to create a presidential candidate he is not going to show much interest in the people at large. He will represent the folks who gave him the $40 million. Example: Bush. Since his election, what has he fought for? Environment? Education? No. His one crusade has been the cutting of the capital gains tax. That was the price the corporations demanded in exchange for buying him, rather than Dukakis, the presidency.

For thirty years I have made the same proposal to correct the great corruption. No candidate or party may buy time or space in the media. Give free media time and space to all candidates. Limit national election campaigns to six weeks,

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which is, more or less, what other First World countries do. A single act of Congress could make our elections unbuyable. However, those who have been elected by the present system are not about to change it.

The two parties, which are really one party, cannot be put to use. They are the country's ownership made carnival. Can the united action of individual citizens regain some control over the government? I think so. But it won't be easy, to riot in understatement. Attempts to cut back the war budget—whether the war be against communism or drugs or us—will be fought with great resourcefulness. When challenged with the billions of dollars wasted or stolen from the Pentagon, the establishment politician's answer is clear: Abortion is against God's law. He promptly changes the subject, the way a magician does when he catches your attention with one hand while the other picks your pocket.

Lately, though, our corporate oligarchs have become alarmed by one development in particular: the breakup of the nation-state almost everywhere. Since the nation-state, as we know it, is a nineteenth-century invention, I feel no sorrow at its demise. But those with orderly minds, eager to impose absolute order on others, are dismayed by the refusal of Latinos, say, to learn English, or Armenians to be Russian, or Québécois to be Canadian, and so on. I think this sudden worldwide desire for tribal identity is healthy, if only because our masters don't. Indeed, they have tried to make it impossible for us to use the word "race" for fear of being smeared by their media as racist—something they are but their critics are often not. Yet we are all racist to the extent that any of us feels that he belongs to a tribe, whether it be one of color or religion or some sort of shared identity.

In actuality, we are now faced with two movements. One is centrifugal: a rushing away from the confines of a nation-state, like the Soviet Union, or from any such iron order, equally unnatural, like heterosexuality, which was invented as recently as 1930.* Simultaneously, there is a centripetal force at work: a coming together of autonomous units for certain shared ends. Hence, the Common Market in Europe. Under a loose sort of confederation, the benefits of a common currency and joint environmental action can be shared by a great many tribes or races that choose, willingly, to cooperate. So we see, on the one hand, a healthy flight from the center in order to retain individuality, and, on the other, a healthy coming together to make a "more perfect life" for the residents of the common planet. Should centripetal forces defeat centrifugal longings, however, then welcome to the anthill society, and to our inglorious common death on a speck of used-up celestial matter.

Our political debate—what little there is—can never speak of the future except in terms of the past. I shall, therefore, present a formula to restore the Republic by moving boldly forward into the past. I wish to invoke the spirit of Henry Clay. Thanks to our educational system, no one knows who he is, but for political purposes he can be first explained, then trotted out as a true America Firster who felt that it was the task of government to make internal improvements, to spend money on education and on the enlargement of the nation's economic plant. Clay, translated in a modern context, would have us abandon all military pretensions on the ground that we are too small and too poor a country to act as a global policeman. He would also suggest that we police ourselves first, and leave—terrible thought—Nicaragua to the Nicaraguans. Yes, Clay *could* be called an isolationist, but what's wrong with that? Our economic failure is making us more and more isolated from the rest of the industrialized world anyway. We could use this quiet time to restore our economic health, to take a few hundred billion dollars from military procurement and put it into education, into finding new ways of training and utilizing the work force, new ways of preserving or restoring earth and air and water. This does not seem to me to be too ambitious a program. Also, ideologically, it is absolutely—even sublimely—*re*actionary, and therefore salable.

But the highly progressive military-industrial-political complex will not easily let go. Ominously, our garrison state is now turning inward to create a police state. More than a million Americans are in prison or under constraint, the largest number, per capita, in the industrialized world. At least we are first at something. Currently there is a plan to reactivate old army camps to house drug users as well as pushers. Of course we could legalize drugs and get rid of the problem but where's the money in that? Where's the fun? Where's the control over all the people all the time?

Any optimistic signs? Yes. More and more of the people who never vote are beginning to worry about their personal finances. They are looking for explanations. And now that the Reagan magic act is over, the majority that does not vote can be reached. Not through the media but through videocassettes. One can make a videocassette very cheaply, with a movie star who will work for nothing,† in order to explain, let us say, the ongoing S&L scandal. These cassettes can be given out free all over the country, which is the only way that the people can be directly addressed as they once were, in the eighteenth century, through pamphlets by the likes of Thomas Paine. I got the cassette idea from that lovable old curmudgeon Ayatollah Khomeini, who flooded Iran with radio tapes from his place of exile in Paris. With those tapes he brought revolution to Iran and overthrew the Shah. I think we can do as well from our exile here at home. We will also have helped create that educated citizenry without which Jefferson felt life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness not possible.

I began this discourse with Jefferson, as did the country, and I end with his great injunction that, should all else fail, the tree of liberty must still be nourished with the blood, if necessary, of tyrants and of patriots. Have a nice millennium. □

* According to Jonathan Ned Katz in *Socialist Review* for February 1990, the word "heterosexual," still not acceptable to the O.E.D., first appeared in *The New York Times* (where else?) in 1930. Plainly a new category, outside the known sciences.

† I know that it is elitist to use a star when a real expert, who is really boring just like everybody else, is available. But on the nuclear freeze, say, Paul Newman was worth a dozen senators.

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EDITORIALS.

(*Continued From Page 189*)
computer screens worldwide may face serious cancer risks, forcing Apple to call for the industry radiation emission standards.

Brodeur writes that by 1986 a link between exposure to low-level electromagnetic waves from power lines and the development of cancer in children was established in a number of Swedish studies, as well as in a major study by the New York State Department of Health. The strength of the 2 to 3 milligauss current (a gauss is a unit of strength of a magnetic field) emitted by the power lines was similar to the strength of the same type of emission measured at a distance of twelve inches from VDTs, according to 1982 studies by Dr. Karel Marha of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Brodeur also cites more recent studies of people and laboratory animals that support the finding that the doses measured by Marha are associated with cancer (especially brain cancer and leukemia) and pregnancy problems ranging from fetal damage to miscarriage.

With the assistance of the editors at *Macworld*, Brodeur tested ten common monitors used with Macintosh computers, with unsettling results. At twelve inches electromagnetic radiation ranged from a low of 1.11 milligauss (but was generally higher than 2) at the front of the screen to a high of 15.86 milligauss at the side of a color, high-resolution monitor. (The sides and backs of monitors emit the highest levels of radiation.) They found that only at a distance of twenty-eight inches—"arm's length"—was it "sensible" to sit at the front of the screen. Four feet was their recommended distance from the sides and back.

Until the Brodeur article appeared Apple did not acknowledge the potential seriousness of the problem. After it appeared, Apple did announce it supported the development of industrywide safety standards for electromagnetic emissions, but it did not call for any protective guidelines in the meantime, and it continues to contend that there is no scientific proof of how electromagnetic radiation affects the body. Rather than take precautions that could prevent health problems, it would wait for scientists to develop a cure. In short, it's business as usual. Brodeur quoted a computer industry spokeswoman who said that asking that pregnant operators be transferred away from VDT terminals "is like asking to be transferred away from a light bulb."

Three friends in the computer industry told me that Brodeur's information has been common knowledge in the field for several years and that they do keep their monitors at arm's length. All knew of people who, they suspected, had contracted cancer from spending too many hours too close to the screen. They also said (and another article in the same issue of *Macworld* confirmed) that Sweden and Canada have set industry standards for VLF (very low frequency) emissions from VDTs and that terminals exist that comply with those standards. Some are available in the United States; however, according to Brodeur it is not clear whether these terminals mitigate the hazards of ELF (extra-low frequency) radiation emissions.

Children in particular like to get close to computer screens, whether they are playing adventure games like Nintendo or learning physics with sophisticated educational software. And schools tend to jam as many monitors as possible into their computer labs. In some classrooms no more than a few inches separate computers lined up in rows back to back. It is rare to find computers in such labs as much as two or three feet apart, much less the four feet that *Macworld* strongly recommends. It is absolutely essential that national guidelines be established that require four-foot spacing and that children stay at least twenty-eight inches from their screens. The government should create standards of healthy and safe computer use and make them legally binding in schools.

In the meantime, children and parents must be informed of the potential health hazards of computer use, and anyone who is pregnant should avoid VDTs altogether. And we must demand of manufacturers that information about electromagnetic emissions be made public. For a copy of Brodeur's article *Nation* readers can send $6 to Macworld Back Issue Fulfillment, 144 Townsend St., San Francisco, CA 94107.

HERBERT KOHL

Herbert Kohl, who has written widely about computers and education, is the author of The Question Is College *(Times Books) and collaborated with Judith Kohl and Myles Horton on* The Long Haul, *just published by Doubleday.*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

ELAYNE RAPPING

THE FEMALE GAZE: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture. *Edited by Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment. The Real Comet Press. 224 pp. Paper $12.95.*

GENDER POLITICS AND MTV: Voicing the Difference. *By Lisa A. Lewis. Temple University Press. 258 pp. $29.95.*

From the early days when feminists looked for "positive" and "negative" role models in the culture to more recent, theoretically sophisticated times, the stance of the feminist critic has remained consistent. She stands at an emotional distance from the object in question and, in one way or another, strips it of its power to seduce and enthrall. The strategy is to liberate us from what used to be called false consciousness.

There's a lot to be said for this position. No feminist in her right mind would deny that much of pop culture is not healthy for women and girls. It's demeaning, misogynous—you know the litany. Seen from another angle, though, it's not clear that this is the best way to approach the "problem" of sexist culture, either politically or theoretically. It's too extreme in its oppositional, either/or assumptions. Implicitly—and this is true of this kind of feminist criticism as well as much feminist alternative art and media—it takes an apocalyptic position about the horrors of mass art. Mass culture is here to stay, it is loved and enjoyed by most women and girls (whether it's seen as a guilty pleasure or not), and feminists have a responsibility, for that reason, to take it seriously and respectfully.

But there's another reason for being skeptical of the usual approach. It's based on an outdated view of the cultural scene. In fact, as every postmodernist knows, there is no more "inside" and "outside," no more clear boundary between high and low, mainstream and alternative culture. Artists today move easily in and out of these categories, and the old concept of co-optation is increasingly imprecise and useless. What does one make of Laurie Anderson, for example, doing interviews on MTV, of performance artists like Ann Magnuson doing Hollywood movies and then returning to New York's downtown scene?

All this is by way of introduction to two new books that deserve attention because they take a totally different approach to women and mass culture. *The Female Gaze* and *Gender Politics and MTV* are both uneven but provocative and important contributions to the feminist critical debate. Nor are they alone. In recent years more and more works of feminist criticism have put forth the argument made in these volumes: that the realm of popular culture is not monolithic and evil but an arena of cultural/political struggle in which artists and audiences wrestle with the contradictions of commercial culture and sometimes even win. Implicit in this approach is another important idea: that women who like schlock can justify their enjoyment; that hidden beneath the glitz and idiocy there is often something valuable.

How do women use popular culture and what does it say about the failures of both avant-garde art and feminism?

The Female Gaze is a collection of British essays on the pleasures of different kinds of trash. The essays are held together by a philosophy presented in the introduction. "We feel," say the editors, "that we cannot afford to dismiss the popular by always positioning ourselves outside it. Instead," they continue, "we are interested in how feminists can intervene in the mainstream to make our meanings part of 'commonsense.'" These are polemical and problematic words, and by and large the essays are too slight and theoretically weak to carry that burden. Nonetheless, as in the most interesting popular culture, there are moments of sheer brillance here and enough of an argument to demand consideration.

These essayists take on the notion—popularized by feminist film theorists associated with the British journal *Screen*—of a "male gaze" in film and television, the assumption that the spectator is always male and the female the object, rather than the subject, of desire. They insist that popular culture, in Susanne Moore's words, is a site of "renegotiations" about the portrayal of both male and female bodies and that this process is the direct result of the influence of "radical political discourses." In other words, Moore argues, feminism *has* altered pop culture by altering the consciousness of both performers and fans. She uses as an example Debbie Harry's 1978 song "Picture This" (a favorite of mine for the very reasons Moore suggests), in which the female singer tells her lover, "I will give you my finest hour/The one I spent/ Watching you shower." The rest of the piece analyzes similar examples, increasingly common these days, in which the male body is the desired object and the female the one who looks.

Other interesting pieces dissect Joan Collins's image and its meaning and the trashy but fascinating pulp novel *Lace*. In both cases the writers play with the contradictions of female representation and point out that the products themselves do the same. *Lace*, for example, shows women being exploited—even raped—by male characters. However, Avis Lewallen argues that "these women are not mere passive victims," because "even when abused and exploited, they fight back and their collective sisterhood provides them with an emotional and economic support network." Still, she admits that "the question is whether the context of this objectification alters the relationship female readers can have with it or whether it merely colludes with conventional, sexist ways of seeing women." Similar questions are raised in Andrea Stuart's defense of the Hollywood version of *The Color Purple*; in spite of its hedging on issues of class and lesbianism and its hokey Hollywood style, she argues, the movie not only represents a vision of black sisterhood that is rare in Hollywood but makes it available to poor black women who don't necessarily read novels.

Janet Lee's analysis of *Elle* magazine is more theoretically complex and satisfying. It begins with a personal state-

Elayne Rapping teaches media studies and women's studies at Adelphi University. Her book on made-for-TV movies will be published in 1991 by the University of Minnesota Press.

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ment: "I really enjoy *Elle* magazine. . . . It *is* stylish, and that stylishness is appealing. . . . [Its text] doesn't tell me what to do and it doesn't keep offering me advice." She ends by suggesting that we take seriously the appeal of such works because young women and working-class women like them. "There are clearly lessons to be learned from the marketplace about women's needs," she concludes, "which neither feminism nor postfeminism are adequately meeting."

Now we are getting to the heart of the matter: the lived experience of the woman viewer herself. Just what is the source of pleasure in this material and what can we learn from it? How do women use popular culture and what does it say about the failures of both avant-garde art and feminism itself to attract wide support, especially among the young, poor and disfranchised?

Two articles address this matter by looking at the Madonna phenomenon. Jackie Stacey's "Desperately Seeking Difference" analyzes the Susan Seidelman film *Desperately Seeking Susan*, in which Madonna plays the Madonna-type character Susan to the counterpoint of Rosanna Arquette's repressed middle-class housewife Roberta. It is Roberta, not a male viewer, who is "the bearer of the look" in her obsessive interest in the Madonna/Susan character, a free spirit who does as she pleases and most definitely controls her own sexuality. Roberta herself—in a wacky series of plot twists—takes on that identity and uses it to change her destiny and escape from her oppressive life. Here we have a fascinating concept: A woman may look at another woman, even at the representation of that woman, and the look itself may be a catalyst for liberation.

Shelagh Young, in the final essay, picks up this theme, again using *Desperately Seeking Susan* and the image of Madonna to make her point. She quotes a critic who attributes to this film a kind of permission given women to "relax and admit that all along we'd loved Madonna." But, says Young, this idea that "we" were ever not relaxed about loving Madonna assumes that women, collectively, are represented by "semi-professional feminists." Young girls have always loved her, Young points out, and so, interestingly enough, have blacks. Certainly gays have formed a significant part of her following as well. So, what's with us middle-class feminists, she asks. We might find out, she suggests, by "listening to the views of [our] wayward daughters who seem to be so actively resisting, rather than conforming to, any simple feminist model." Madonna, after all, is no bimbo, no pushover. She's a woman who represents herself as powerful, autonomous and also very sexy—on her own terms. This kind of representation may not appeal to second-wave feminists fighting to escape the Marilyn Monroe/victim image. But their daughters have different agendas, different battles.

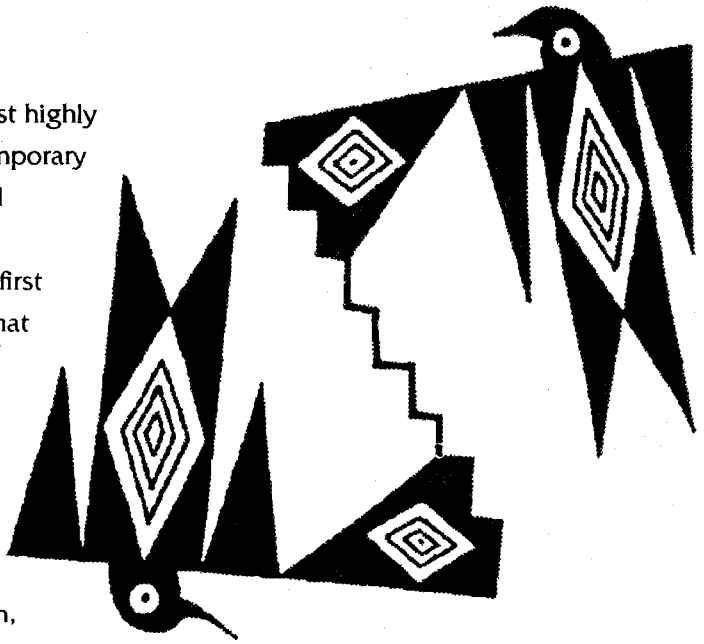
This brings us to Lisa Lewis's far more theoretically ambitious study of women rock musicians and their fans. Written in an academic jargon that is sometimes nearly unreadable, it nonetheless makes a strong case for the less-well-argued thesis of *The Female Gaze*: that popular culture is contested terrain and that women, as artists and as spectators and fans, can and have made astonishing inroads into a commercial, male-defined turf.

Her book, originally a doctoral dissertation that could have used extensive stylistic and thematic revision, sabotages its own goals in many ways. It's a paean to pop culture and its female fans, and her very upbeat thesis is that women rockers and fans have been able to use the contradictions, both ideological and com-

Winged Words

American Indian Writers Speak

By Laura Coltelli



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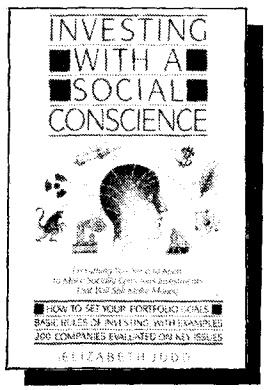

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mercial, of pop culture to do what the Gamman/Marshment anthology proposes: "intervene in the mainstream to make our meanings part of 'commonsense.' " Yet she addresses her academic colleagues rather than the women about whom she clearly cares and with whom she actually identifies. Teenage girls won't read this book; neither will women performers.

Nevertheless, the book is full of substantive theoretical gold. It's audacious, original and—despite the assumed academic audience—very much engaged in its subject. In her introduction Lewis makes a point of stressing her own personal and emotional involvement in her subject. Attending concerts, watching videos and reading popular media interviews with women rockers became a significant part of her life. "I . . . was affected by the musicians' address to women," she says, "and studying them was a way of using their texts in my everyday life." Clearly Lewis stands inside, participates in and identifies with the female culture of fandom. One of her more compelling themes is that teen fans are not spaced-out groupies but rather an impressively articulate and autonomous "collective" of women who successfully battle—in their roles as consumers—for the cause of women-oriented cultural representation.

The book's strength derives from Lewis's comprehensive look at gender issues in commercial video—most obviously in MTV videos. She starts with the ingenious strategy developed by MTV executive Bob Pittman, whose market research told him that there was money to be made by focusing on 18- to 34-year-old white males. But video also provided a space for women musicians. Female performers and viewers became commercially important "properties" and "markets," and this gave both musicians and fans a new position of power to define what they did and demand what they wanted. Such are the sometimes fortuitous workings of capitalism.

The meat of the book is in the chapters that focus on the ideas and strategies of the musicians and fans themselves. Her profiles of four performers—Madonna, Tina Turner, Pat Benatar and Cyndi Lauper—are eye-openers. One after the other speaks loudly and intelligently about her battle to overturn the industry's male-defined ideology about gender relations, particularly in adolescent culture. Lewis cites such videos as Turner's "What's Love Got to Do With It?" and Benatar's "Love Is a Battlefield" as examples of female performers appropriating the male turf of the streets in narratives of female bonding and sexual antagonism. And of course there's the now-famous Lauper video "Girls Just Want to Have Fun." In it a racially mixed group of working-class girlfriends literally take over the public space traditionally reserved for males and behave in delightfully outrageous ways that previously only boys could get away with. Lauper even changed the lyrics of the song—written and meant to be sung by a male—to make a consciously feminist statement.

But the most important and original sections of this book deal with fandom. I have never read an academic book that treated teen rock fans quite so respectfully and made so strong a case for the positive aspects of fandom. Lewis argues, plausibly, that groupies and intensely involved fans are not really dreaming of sexual relationships with their male idols. It is far more likely, as common sense and my own feminist assumptions would suggest, that female fans identify with them and want to be what their rock heroes seem to be in a world in which girls don't usually have such options. This is borne out dramatically in Lewis's discussion of how MTV was forced to air tough women performers because female viewers, contrary to Pittman's original strategy, became as loyal to the network as their male counterparts and preferred to identify with women like Turner, Lauper and Madonna.

So what can women realistically accomplish in mainstream media? Lewis thinks, and she's persuasive, that not just love but American pop culture itself is a battlefield in which some women—both fans and stars—have become aggressive, effective forces in the ongoing struggle over cultural hegemony. Lewis understands fully that most commercial and pop culture is far from liberating, and she never underestimates the power of commercial and political forces to sabotage progressive movements. Still, there's something exhilarating about her unfashionable cultural radicalism. She believes that we do have the power—limited but very real—to fight. And she also believes that artists and fans have more clout than is generally acknowledged by the classic discourses—the old Frankfurt School, the positive-role-model feminists and now the postmodernist/poststructuralist crowd.

Lewis ends with a poignant appeal to

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Instead of saying, You can't have nudity onstage, they say, You can only spend money in "responsible" ways.

I spoke with Bogart some time before the blade descended, when it still looked as though she'd emerge from whatever gauntlet the board would make her run. She talked honestly about the challenges her initial season posed for Trinity's subscribers, about her fervent desire to develop "a balance which is enriching and at the same time challenging" for her next season, to attract a more diverse audience. She recalled one performance of Maria Irene Fornes's *And What of the Night?* when "one side of the audience stood and clapped and the other side booed. What more do you want in the theater?"

Many other countries, Bogart observed, "have a history of understanding why they go to the theater. It plays a very specific role in the times. But we in the United States don't have that. The role of theater in the United States hasn't been articulated. Therefore, it's always an extracurricular activity." So at Trinity, Bogart said, she worked with one overriding intent: "to discover what the role of theater is, what human needs it fulfills." And she talked about the deep personal resonance the repressive heritage of the 1950s holds for her: "There was a political movement that was so efficacious, not only at the blacklisting of artists but at the complete annihilation" of political culture.

In spite of the firestorms, Trinity felt like a home to Bogart, "a place where a body of work can be created, where I can support other artists, where I can train myself and others." But Trinity was also a homecoming: Army-brat Bogart spent her adolescent years in Rhode Island and saw the first live theater of her life—a production of *Hamlet*—at Trinity. An N.E.A. pilot program undertook the extraordinary project of busing every schoolchild in Rhode Island to a Trinity Rep performance. So after a career that has won her as many accolades in Berlin and Paris as in New York, Bogart apparently managed to break the curse that tells the American artist You Can't Go Home Again.

Trinity's hometown may end up being the biggest loser in this debacle. Providence, ignored or condescended to as a hinterland burg by the culture mavens of Boston or New York or even New Haven, has lost its claim to being home of the hottest little showplace in New England. □

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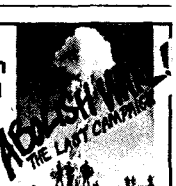

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what's best known as a film full of the athletic innocence of Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra became a musical parable about the manipulation of women by sweet-voiced, predatory All-American Men. And those characters most evidently containing their hysteria are working for the sex police.

Anyone who doubts that gender politics were involved in Bogart's departure need only examine how, as always with "minority hiring," the old Excellence argument reared its head. Over and over this past season, local and national newspaper articles about Bogart mentioned her "lack of experience" at running a theater. Unlike whom? Robert Brustein managed to found the Yale and American Repertory theaters with plenty of experience as a scholar and critic but without having "run" a theater. Neither had such acclaimed directors as Arvin Brown of New Haven's Long Wharf or Gordon Davidson of the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Had Leonard Bernstein ever "run" a symphony orchestra before he was tapped to head the New York Philharmonic?

And consider the way *The New York Times* summarized Bogart's challenges to the *modus operandi* she inherited at Trinity: They attributed her woes to "tinkering with that formula" which had become comfortable for the Trinity audience under the previous regime. Such words constitute a trivializing of the salubrious assault Bogart made against an institution already so deep in an artistic rut that subscriptions had declined precipitately over the four years before her arrival. Surely Brustein or Joe Papp would have had such efforts dignified by words more like "experimenting with new forms" or "lighting a fire in the Canon."

John Howland, the chair of Trinity's board of directors, made the eulogizing noises that are customary when the blood's still fresh on the chopping block. His sober pastor's voice of reason intoned the old sermon about returning Trinity to its "traditional programmatic structure." Like a calm but firm parent who has had enough shenanigans from an ebullient child, Howland prophesied the sign by which Bogart's grown-up replacement would be recognized: It would be someone they could trust "to operate within a $3 million budget," a third less than the theater's budget for 1989-90. Howland owned that he was "disappointed" in Bogart's resignation; "however, the economic realities presently facing the theater, and the arts industry in general, must be fully understood and addressed." The implication was clear: It's not that we think Anne isn't *terrifically* gifted and *delightfully* imaginative, she just has *no* head for figures.

In his statement about Bogart's resignation, Howland made pious reference to the right's assault on the N.E.A. But one of the things Jesse Helms is saying to artists is, We won't tell you what to paint or perform, but we will tell you what we won't pay for. The word on the resident-theater gossip circuit right now is that Trinity's board could never stand too close to Helms's spotlight by voicing its objections to Bogart's inaugural season. They simply made her an offer she couldn't accept.

Howland's defunding tactic—cloaking objections to content beneath Reagan-era cluckings about ineffectual management—is finally far more dangerous than the explicit threats of Helms. Overwhelmingly, the boards of directors of American arts institutions are made up of business people and bankers whose idea of the ideal arts manager is Lee Iacocca. These boards are far less straightforward than Helms in addressing the root cause for their censorious impulses.

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ALABI'S WORLD

By Richard Price

In the early 18th century in the Dutch colony of Suriname—renowned for its heights of planter opulence and depths of slave misery—hundreds of African slaves escaped to the forest to build a new society based on resistance and equality. Exploring the collision of African and European cultures in colonial South America, *Alabi's World* relates the history of this rebel nation. It tells of black men and women's bloody battles for independence, their fragile truce with the colonial government, and the attempt of their leader, Alabi, to reconcile his people with white law and a white God. Richard Price presents these colonial encounters by interweaving four voices: the oral testimonies of Alabi's descendants, the reports of the exasperated Dutch officials sent out to control the rebels, the diaries of the German Moravian missionaries determined to convert them, and the historian's own mediating commentaries.

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Chloe, undergoing a similar crisis over her father, takes her canoe out in a storm during a weekend on the lake and frightens both her lover, Gabe, and Olivia. She is working out her relationship to her father and his senile rejection of her. Chloe is always turned on by "guys in trouble" and Olivia falls for "the blind narcissist only she could understand." When Chloe says she is obsessed by two visions, the photos of Fred Hampton's "door shattered by police bullets" and the frantic eyes of a young friend who is going to join the Weather Underground, a whole suppressed period of history surfaces. The friends' talking cure becomes the narrator's writing cure.

This is a far cry from Roches Ridge, with its rollicking, raunchy and sometimes sadistic humor, its country characters vicious and depraved, its animal sacrifices, Jesus freaks, weight-lifting weirdos, the reunion of priest, housekeeper and child in soapy suspense and many other local narratives as hilarious as those in *Kinflicks*. Alther is a savage comic genius, but I keep wondering if one could, in good conscience, appear on *Saturday Night Live* with her. Most of the jokes are based on class differences.

I wish I could believe that Alther is making a comment on Vermont's rural poverty as a result of the move of the cotton mills to the South when she tells the story of Waneeta Marsh. Waneeta has twin daughters named Polly and Esther and boys named Orlon, Rayon (Ray) and Dacron (Dack). *Bedrock* is chock-full of such jokes and stories. I confess that there was one that really got me. Clea Shawn is giving Christmas dinner to her briefly assembled family in the Roches Ridge house it has taken months to renovate. Her college student son Theo asks during a pause in the conversation, "So, Mom, how's it going with menopause?" She says fine, thank you. I laughed until I wept, having a son who asked me the same question. This is what feminism has done to mothers and sons.

What feminism has done to fiction is to allow friendship between women to be the center of the novel as the heroines struggle for independence. But sex and class are overdone in Alther's grisly Gothic, and underdone in Chevigny's genteel high comedy. More than political sisterhood, less than blood sisterhood, women's friendships promise to engage on other levels the novels of the nineties. □

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THEATER.

MARGARET SPILLANE

To walk in the doors of the old vaudeville palace housing Anne Bogart's Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island, this season was to feel the zing of new blood coursing. Here's the scene in the lobby a few months ago, for the opening night of Bertolt Brecht's *Baal*: As ticket holders amble in, the air fills with the orotund speech of Jesse Helms issuing from a tape recorder. On one wall is a blown-up transcript from the *Congressional Record* of a recent speech given by Rhode Island Senator Claiborne Pell, once a vital figure in the launch of the National Endowment for the Arts, now a fainthearted apologist for North Carolina's leisure-suit Savonarola. Alongside are grouped photos of Brecht himself appearing before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and several dozen reproductions of those masterpieces of Expressionist painting that Hitler labeled "degenerate." A projector in midlobby casts upon a small screen images of one such "degenerate" artist being grilled and pilloried in a Third Reich court of law.

And onstage that night, Brecht's tale of a poet driven by a furnacelike appetite for flesh, food and alcohol is given the kind of production (directed by Robert Woodruff) that lets those lusts blossom like a garden in hell. Baal is a comic but menacing presence as he struts nearly naked, seducing women, men and schoolgirls, fondling his genitals and miming self-sodomy with a microphone. Not a whit of socially redeeming value by Senator Helms's standards—but wait! While all these filthy acts are happening, Jesse's voice booms through the theater. A sound designer has monkeyed with a tape of Helms's no-grants-for-pornographers speech, and now the Senator sounds like Max Headroom, elaborately stuttering over words like "h-h-h-h-homosexual" and "s-s-s-s-s-sadomasochism." At a moment when no regional theater can afford to look the N.E.A. gift horse in the mouth, such witty kiss-my-ass outspokenness is both courageous and inspiring.

Bogart's all-but-at-gunpoint resignation from Trinity on May 21—after the theater's board abruptly shredded her budget—puts an end to a brief era when that company looked to be the jaunty, fresh-faced daredevil of American regional theater. It's also a bracing reminder that artistic direction on the stage has remained an impregnable stronghold of male privilege. For years, Zelda Fichandler of the Washington, D.C., Arena Stage was virtually the single exception to that boys-only rule in regional theater. Bogart's selection by Trinity last year appeared to touch off a wave of board-of-directors bravado that permitted a cascade of female appointments: Mary B. Robinson now heads the Philadelphia Drama Guild and Sharon Ott the Berkeley Repertory Theater in California, and Emily Mann took over Princeton's McCarter Theater in July.

At Bogart's Trinity, that gesture of gender integration did not stop at the top. During the 1989-90 season Trinity featured more plays written, adapted and directed by women than the five other New England resident theaters—the American Repertory Theater, the Hartford Stage, the Huntington Theatre, the Yale Rep and the Long Wharf—combined. And her proposed 1990-91 season was even more woman-intensive, with women writers or directors in half the announced slots.

Bogart's awareness of sexual politics was nowhere more evident than in the season's crowning achievement—*On the Town*, staged by Bogart and Trinity's music director, Jeff Halpern. On one level this intimate recasting of a Broadway classic offered enough pure fun to delight my 6-year-old daughter. But driving the production's nonstop physical comedy was an edgy sexual hysteria;

Margaret Spillane, former associate editor and theater columnist of the New Haven Independent, *is the tutor in writing at Pierson College, Yale University.*

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of her heroines. But the style doesn't preach:

> Olivia's words strayed like sheep on a prairie. Chloe was a harried sheepdog, running, circling, and yelping. "But didn't you say—? . . . But is it really that? Then why can't you—?" Olivia wouldn't be herded, and Chloe regretted her little protests, which hung ringing in the silence that fell between them.
>
> It came over Chloe then that her dismay was bone-familiar. Olivia's irony and paralysis—they were like her mother's. Running from one grievance to the next, getting nowhere, the way her mother used to fume and rant behind her father's back in the old days, before she got religion. Now everything that had once fuelled her wrath seemed heaven-sent to nourish a new forbearance, even equanimity. Yet the sharpness of her tongue when Chloe was young matched only her weakness of resource.

The January 1970 chapter of *Chloe and Olivia* is the centerpiece of the book. Chloe meets Olivia in Brooklyn, where Olivia's mother is in the midst of a breast-cancer scare. A professional voice coach, Olivia's mother, Esther, has always loved her students more than her daughter. The two friends get through the crisis and ride the subway back to the city, encountering a demonstration and Chloe's students on the way. They air out their grievances against the women's movement, seen then as a betrayal of movement men (I remember it well—how "selfish" to think about women instead of workers or the war). Their conversation is keyed to the rhythms of the subway ride, full of stops and starts, jerking forward, lurching along. (This journey is meant to remind the reader of classical underground trips but it made me think of Vita Sackville-West's only feminist novel, the splendid *All Passion Spent*, in which an old lady liberates herself into the life she wants by riding the tube to Hampstead in London, growing in courage at each stop.) They miss their stop; the conversations of other passengers intrude and are absorbed. They have descended into hell and then risen again in a quest for self-knowledge which they only seem to be able to make together. They ponder Esther's rescue of herself: " 'She set about organizing the rescue of her breast as if it were, I don't know'—she threw up her hand—'an Italian Jew!' 'God, Livy! She saw cancer as fascism? But what courage!' "

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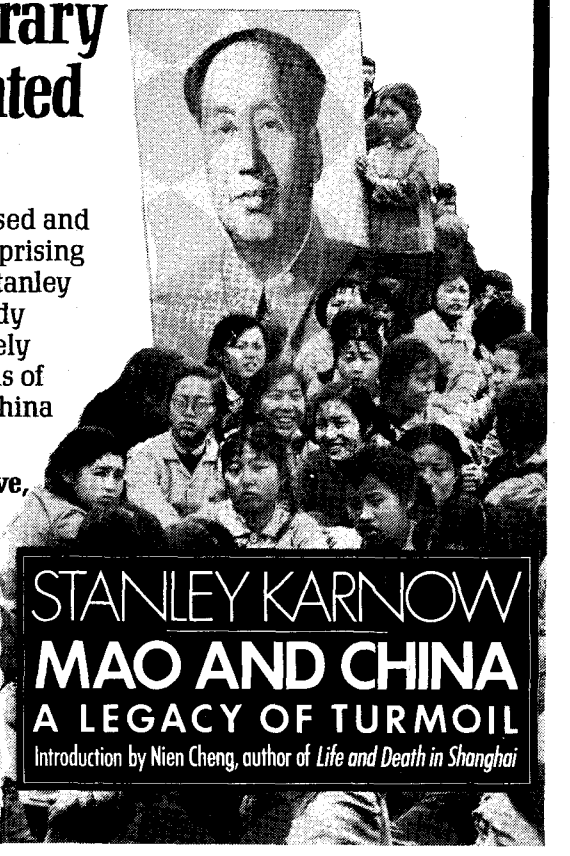

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the specificities of radical feminist analyses and their demise, Echols also appears to be trying to wrest the label "radical feminist" back from those who might continue to claim it and whom she would see more accurately described as cultural feminists, in particular those in the sexually conservative and protectionist strains of feminism in the 1980s.

Daring to Be Bad is a fascinating and frustrating book that, more honestly than most, participates in the battles it describes. Alice Echols's work should provoke new debates about radicalism as well as about feminist analyses and activism. □

Friends and Lovers

JANE MARCUS

CHLOE AND OLIVIA. *By Bell Gale Chevigny. Grove Weidenfeld. 355 pp. $18.95.*

BEDROCK. *By Lisa Alther. Knopf. 325 pp. $19.95.*

The elegance and reserve of Bell Gale Chevigny's spare, Jane Austenish first novel, *Chloe and Olivia*, can only be compared with *Bedrock*, Lisa Alther's big, swashbuckling adventure tale (her fourth), in that they will occupy that shelf in the house of fiction—probably in the kitchen—reserved for feminist novels. Otherwise they have nothing in common except their reach for "high art" on the shoulders of old-fashioned realism right at the peak of the postmodern avant-garde. Actually, Alther is in high gear (*Bedrock* is a *Kinflicks* for the 1990s, minus the snowmobiles), and she kicks into the carnivalesque with her own peculiar brand of decidedly unrealistic grotesquerie. We could call it a Southerner's version of Northern Gothic. There is much hilarity and hundreds of jokes at the expense of the dopey, criminal and inbred inhabitants of Roches Ridge, Vermont. If this town existed, they could sue for libel—so speaks a daughter of the Green Mountain State, born but not bred in its rural paradise.

In Clea Shawn, Lisa Alther has created one of the most spoiled, overprotected and privileged heroines in recent serious fiction. If menopausal yuppies really do get away with all this—finding themselves in their 50s after a lifetime of promiscuity and producing advertising-pretty photographs—then life isn't fair. Clea never gets a disease, despite all her sleeping around. Her rich businessman husband remains emotionally faithful despite his flings; her perfect children don't turn out to be drug addicts. At all the places where God intervenes to strike the working-class or sub- or ex-working-class characters dead, Clea emerges triumphant. We are asked to believe that she sees in a flash the way to become a true artist and a good woman as she escapes from her stressful, privileged New York life to remodel a classical Vermont house. In restoring the house she restores her own soul and gets to have a passionate love affair with her best friend, the European artist Elke, after "almost twenty years of foreplay." Lesbianism is a luxury, an extension of the privilege of the middle-class married woman—a postmenopausal perk, as it were, for having played the game of wife and mother. Roches Ridge boasts a more public—and of course, comic—lesbianism, a commune of "Boudiccas" performing nude ceremonies in the woods. Is this a satire of Kate Millett? Ishtar of the twenty-six former lives is a New Age lesbian love-in all by herself.

Readers of *Chloe and Olivia* might expect to find a lesbian novel, since the title, from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (actually, "Chloe *liked* Olivia" is what Woolf wrote), refers to the denial of the existence of such relations between women in fiction, in lectures Woolf wrote during the censorship trial for *The Well of Loneliness*. Woolf's characters are scientists, one single and one married; "they shared a—dot dot dot—laboratory." The allusion is a code for lesbianism, and Woolf tries to imagine what a fiction would be like that took women's friendships seriously. But Chloe and Olivia couldn't conceive of their relationship in those terms, and *Chloe and Olivia* is not a lesbian novel. A blurb from Vivian Gornick on the jacket claims that Woolf would have approved of this work. Would she? I think she'd be disappointed in the continuing social constraints on women's friendships and the fiction about them. Chevigny's modest and restrained novel examines the friendship between two women who grew up in the 1950s and met at age 24 in 1961 in Rome after college. Their capacities for love and friendship seem socially determined by the times, and their inability to express either their erotic or their emotional and political needs to each other is a brilliant re-creation of that deadly period.

Friendship, Chevigny seems to be saying, like sexuality, is socially constructed, and she catches the sour notes of repression and suppression in the allowable parameters for an educated WASP heterosexual woman in a "then" that we now recognize as the dark age that hatched feminism. The basis of the friendship, primary in both lives but never really acknowledged (as one would have to in a marriage), is the therapeutic function of their endless analyzing of Olivia's bad mother and Chloe's bad father. Their differences are political—Chloe, the New York movement activist and professional teacher; Olivia, married to Karl, the egomaniacal, brooding artist figure from the sixties, going from motherhood to divorce to a new career. Their lives are entirely different and they seldom meet or dare to write or call as Olivia moves all over the country. They both fear dependence on each other, as we did in those days. The links that bind or bond them are so different from the kind of trust now common. I think that's it—they don't dare trust each other except in talk, in the sisterhood of self-analysis. If I test Chloe's and Olivia's behavior against my own in friendships with women not in the movement, it rings true. Without missing a beat, after not seeing each other for five years we can take up the lament where we left off—our insensitive husbands, our difficult children and oh, God, our parents. Chloe and Olivia survive on just that heady psychological food—the relief we got from mutual blaming sessions now reserved for therapy; the friend as "other"; the ear to hear complaints, an ear that would never demand action as a result of growing self-knowledge. What Chevigny shows most painfully is the limit of a friendship felt as primary but not lived (or loved) as primary. Fifties friendships between women never made demands of their own but were responsive to what happened to the other's "real" relationships of blood or sex.

Chevigny's writing is dry and ironic. She's a moralist in the George Eliot tradition, concentrating on the inner lives

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bianism and heterosexuality were being disrupted. At the same time, this disruption did not necessarily dissolve anyone's schooling in conventional homophobia. Different or the same, the external social stigma against lesbianism represented an additional factor that did not accompany radical feminist divisions over class.

In her discussion of the devolution from radical feminism to cultural feminism, Echols seems in a sense caught in the logic of her own narrative line, which is very much a downward trajectory. With the triumph of cultural feminism, she argues, the women's liberation movement became what the politico women and the left had claimed it was all along: apolitical. Echols runs the risk of presenting radical feminism as a phase between these two stronger forces, the New Left in disarray and cultural feminism on the rise.

Daring to Be Bad offers the kind of critical attention that contemporary feminism has lacked. But, despite the interviews Echols quotes throughout, it is essentially an intellectual history of what was also a social movement. Her focus on a few groups and their internal debates has a curiously isolating effect. Although the institutions created by the women's liberation movement are mentioned—the rape crisis centers, hotlines, women's centers, health centers, battered women's shelters, abortion referral services and clinics, newspapers, journals, coffeehouses, dances, resource collections—they appear only parenthetically. (Only feminist businesses, which are seen as emblematic of cultural feminism, are discussed in detail.) Also, though Echols talks about the influence of radical feminism on liberal feminism, in its growth and its decline, this is not discussed in much detail. Similarly, the gay liberation movement is only briefly mentioned, even though its development affected both the lesbians who entered women's liberation and the women who came out there. While the shape of Echols's book is clearly determined by her particular focus on the history of radical feminism, such absences strengthen the sometimes grim effect of its detailed accounts of trashings, expulsions and burnout.

Echols is attempting to reorient feminism in relation to the left, in particular to move beyond what she describes as cultural feminism's "demonization" of the left, by emphasizing the degree to which radical feminism continued to be political in the left's terms. By exploring

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Psycholinguist Suzette Haden Elgin has presented her innovative self-defense principles in a variety of formats. She has given workshops and seminars all over the U.S., including verbal self-defense sessions for doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. Dr. Elgin has also created a self-defense tape and a training manual for people who teach her self-defense techniques.

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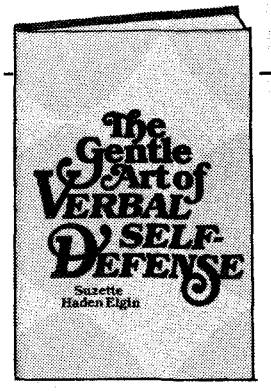

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to engage in personal analysis and participatory politics around the issues of their own lives at the moment when the Movement was turning toward increasing hierarchy, factionalism and macho violence. The degree to which radical feminists insisted on gender as the "primary contradiction," to the exclusion of race and class, was a response to the left's refusal to acknowledge gender as an issue, in comparison with race and class. If the early radical feminist groups were marked by splits between women who identified as either feminists or politicos, that division itself was exacerbated by the left's hostility.

Nevertheless, Echols contends, the early radical feminists and the politicos shared a common commitment to "radical politics," to an economic analysis, even if the anticapitalism of some of the radical feminists took the form of arguing that a feminist revolution would subsume the socialist revolution. This commitment, according to Echols, distinguished radical feminists from both contemporary liberal feminists (working to gain "equality in an unjust society") and later cultural feminists (explicitly hostile to the left).

Radical feminism's other distinctive element was its understanding of gender. While cultural feminists inherited from radical feminists their crucial emphasis on gender, their analyses were opposed.

> Radical feminism was a political movement dedicated to eliminating the sex-class system, whereas cultural feminism was a countercultural movement aimed at reversing the cultural valuation of the male and the devaluation of the female. . . . radical feminists . . . wanted to render gender irrelevant, while cultural feminists were generally essentialists who sought to celebrate femaleness. Thus, we find radical feminists mobilizing women on the basis of their similarity to men and cultural feminists organizing women around the principle of female difference.

Echols then describes cultural feminism's essentialism reflected in the construction of an alternative women's culture, and in a general turning away from activism and toward a more privatized, life-style movement engaged in the search for individual self-improvement and personal solutions. She sees the ascendancy of cultural feminism as a response to political backlash, as well as in the context of the earlier transitions toward cultural alternatives of other participants in 1960s radical politics. But the demise of radical feminism at the hands of cultural feminism is explained particularly in terms of the former's inability to deal with difference, especially the issues of class and lesbianism.

In particular, "the movement was convulsed by the gay-straight split" caused by the arrival or the coming out of lesbians in the feminists' midst in the early 1970s. According to Echols's analysis, the lesbian feminists, in particular The Furies, the only lesbian feminist group she discusses in detail, became the Weathermen of the women's liberation movement. The Weathermen demanded that leftist radicals "pick up the gun" and put their bodies on the line. With The Furies, "coming out" became the equivalent of "picking up the gun"—feminists were told to put their bodies on the line by lying down beside one another.

Cultural feminism is then seen as in part a recuperative strategy to reunite the movement by defusing the lesbian threat through re-emphasizing a generalized female identity while downplaying the issue of sexuality. Lesbianism was recast as a matter of political and emotional, not sexual, choice. These are described as moves supported by both heterosexual and lesbian feminists, even though Echols also describes straight women leaving the movement and comments that by 1975 the radical wing was dominated by lesbians. The lesbians were a threat to radical feminism both because they were confrontational—engaging in their own form of vanguardism that alienated heterosexual feminists—and because they were conciliatory, cooperating in a denial of their threatening sexuality.

By explaining radical feminism's failure to survive the lesbians as an example of its inability to deal with "difference," Echols is adding lesbianism to the triad of class, race and gender that became feminism's paradigm for differences in the 1980s, and which markedly excludes sexual preference. But Echols describes radical feminist groups in the paradoxical position of sheltering women who were falling in love with each other, while their analysis was dismissive if not disapproving of lesbianism. This suggests that the implosion caused by the lesbian presence was not only a matter of difference but also of similarity. Not only were lesbians suddenly unprecedentedly visible in a heterosexual social context but these were women who had previously appeared (because they were in the closet) or had been straight. Whatever barriers there were thought to be between les-

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second-wave feminists to listen to their daughters. She quotes two teens, wise beyond their years, to this effect. "The women's movement must now come to terms with the contradiction of needing young women to be part of it, and treating us as if we were smaller, inadequate and immature versions of older women in it. Obviously," they go on, "our experiences are different from yours. But that doesn't make them less valid." Lewis concludes that the emergence of "girl culture" is important politically and that feminists must try to understand it.

The Female Gaze ends on a similar note. Both these volumes are tentative and flawed in various ways. But they are asking hard questions, challenging political and theoretical dogma, and provoking us to think about popular culture in a way that offers a more hopeful perspective on what's actually happening and where the contradictions can be made to work for us. □

The Way We Were

JULIE ABRAHAM

DARING TO BE BAD: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975. *By Alice Echols. Foreword by Ellen Willis. University of Minnesota Press. 416 pp. $35. Paper $14.95.*

Notes From the First Year, in 1968, marked radical feminists' sense of a new beginning, and twenty-two years later—when "women" has become a grouping always broken into smaller and sometimes competing subsets; transpositions of the personal and the political have become clichés; and "oppression" can seem such a clumsy term—we are still arguing over what was begun, and what the consequences have been. The effect of Alice Echols's new history, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967–1975*, is to offer a definition of terms as well as a record of this "women's rebellion." She sets out, in particular, to affirm the connections between radical feminism and its predecessor, the New Left, and to mark a distinction not always apparent to the participants, between radical feminism and its successor, cultural feminism. Both of these moves are part of an assertion of the politics of radical feminism, in contrast with cultural feminism. Echols focuses on the challenges radical feminists faced from the beginning about just how revolutionary, just how radical, feminism could be. She assumes that her readers will supply their own understanding or memory of the shock and the energy created by women's liberation's new vision of the world.

Daring to Be Bad offers the detail of the construction of a movement: the meetings, the workshops, the groups formed, the actions planned and carried out or not, the conferences attended and perhaps disrupted, the manifestoes written, the conflicts about whether, when and how to organize others. This is the kind of information about the history of women's liberation that until now could be found only in scattered reminiscences. Using oral histories as well as detailed readings of contemporary texts, Echols concentrates on a few, primarily East Coast, groups on the ground that they were often the most influential, both in terms of the analyses they produced and by virtue of their access to the New York City media. She also argues that the debates she describes among the members of New York Radical Women, Cell 16 in Boston, Redstockings, The Feminists, New York Radical Feminists and then The Furies in Washington were repeated across the country in similar groups, simultaneously or within the next few years.

Such debates centered on questions of victimization, agency and responsibility. Were women conditioned to accept their subordination, " 'messed up' as well as 'messed over,' " or—the "pro-woman" line—were they only "messed over," cooperating because of economic and other constraints? Were individual men responsible for as well as benefiting from the oppression of women, or was it a matter of patriarchal institutions within which individuals could or could not choose to participate?

Betty Friedan attacked the radical feminists for "waging a 'bedroom war.' " But it was the radical feminists who raised the issue of rape, who escalated attempts to reform abortion laws into a battle for women's right to an abortion, and who challenged the institutions of marriage and the family as the prime locations of women's oppression. Because these issues would become so explosive, Echols pays particular attention to the various analyses of sexuality that developed with radical feminism's "politicization of personal life." In "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," Ann Koedt "distinguished between the institution of heterosexuality and heterosexual sex," as well as making "the earliest and most explicit connection between the institution of heterosexuality and women's oppression." Nevertheless, Shulamith Firestone assumed heterosexuality when she argued that "a revolutionary in every bedroom cannot fail to shake up the status quo."

Echols's presentation of this material revolves around two major sources of conflict: the new movement's relation to the left, and relationships between women, within the movement and beyond. Women's liberation's connection to the left was played out in practice partly through the debate about the responsibilities of individual men. But there were also splits between the radical feminists and the "politicos," "who attributed women's oppression to capitalism, whose primary loyalty was to the left, and who longed for the imprimatur of the 'invisible audience' of male leftists." Within women's liberation, there was nonetheless initially an assumption of female identity, if not unity, "that most women were like ourselves—not different," as Kathie Sarachild puts it. Consciousness raising among predominantly white and middle-class women could then be the basis of a general analysis of women's lives. But there were battles over leadership in a system based on egalitarianism (battles that took on a class-based edge). Women of color were always a minority. And there was the interior division harder to plot than class or race, because it was always shifting—the "lavender menace" of lesbianism.

Echols places "radical feminism" between the left, or the Movement, of the 1960s and the cultural feminism of the mid-1970s and beyond. She gives new detail to the legend of the descent of women's liberation from the left and civil rights movements of the sixties—and the conflicts between the political promise of those movements and the experiences, particularly those of white women, within them. Some early feminists brought from the left a sense of the possibility of connecting the personal and the political, models for the form of small-group analysis that would become "consciousness raising," and organizational skills and contacts. But, Echols argues, the left responded to women's liberation with hostility because the women were beginning

Julie Abraham teaches English and women's studies at Emory University.

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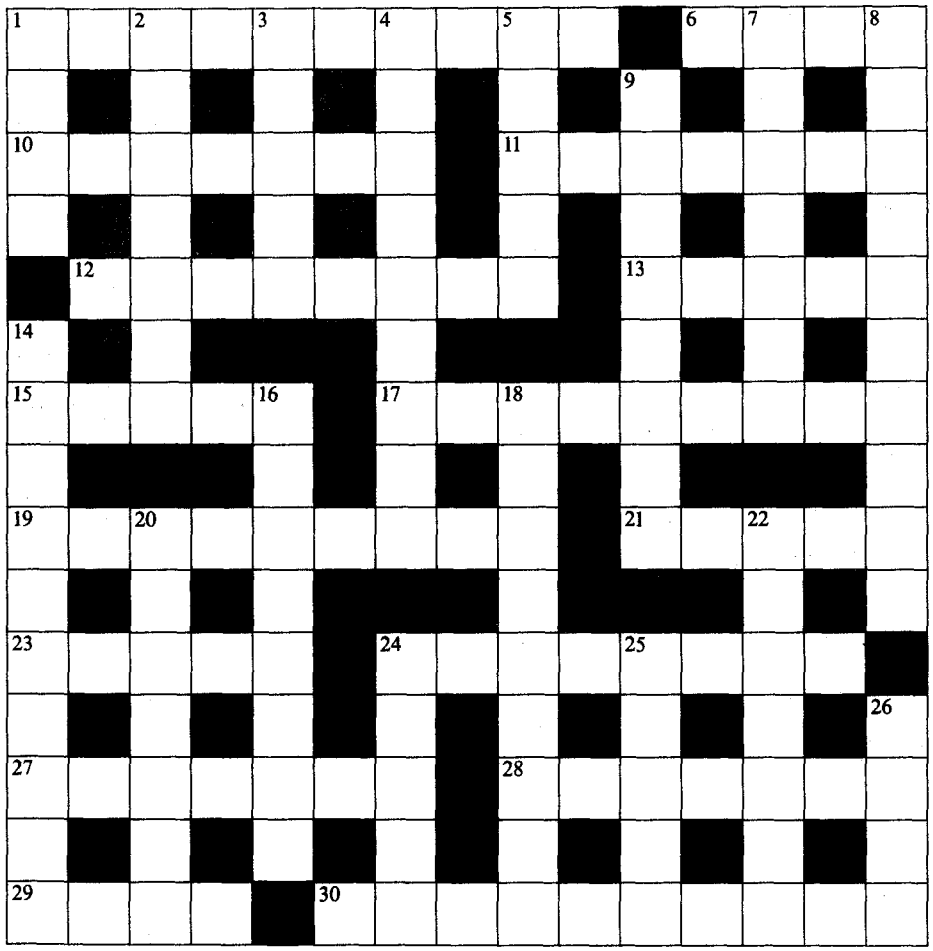

ACROSS

1 and 6 If you get a tent returned, put your head down—some might have a shot at it! (10,4)
10 Water and wine—that's what made such as Bristol once! (7)
11 A person from the country is sort of real with one. (7)
12 Decorated and ruffled to show what you might not want on top. (8)
13 Fix up your old clothes and find a place for the vegetables! (5)
15 You might go up on it to look long and hard, one hears. (5)
17 A bad time to a North Carolina hothead is a vacation out West. (4,5)
19 If you have the will, she may take care of it later. (9)
21 Dragon in the sky! (5)
23 It's illegal to do or take backwaters. (5)
24 See 5 down
27 What a player doesn't like to be with what he hopes to bring in and beats in the race . . . (7)
28 . . . and what one may try to do eyeball to eyeball. It's only a prospect. (7)
29 and 30 With this you can say "Nobody owns me!" (4-10)

DOWN

1 and 14 The players, like people without one, make nasty remarks! (4,10)
2 A large drop of water, again badly positioned with rain not getting in. (7)
3 and 16 Such a large amount, though not exactly specified, could in addition make things square. (1,4,5,3)
4 A child might be so frightened with such an outdated pronouncement. (2,7)
5 and 24 across Early Americans who occupied high places? (5-8)
7 If you have to have your cake, leave it so! (A crazy nun swallows stirred tea at some point.) (7)
8 Sounds like a covering for the head while sleeping, having been conferred on onetime errant types. (10)
9 A scout is told to be, when possibly peeled ahead of time. (8)
14 See 1 down
16 See 3 down
18 The southpaw evidently can't be so very adroit! (9)
20 Descriptive of the kid who sang "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth?" (The garden alternatively is cut and mixed.) (7)
22 In consequence of a general principle, previous to getting in first class shape. (1,6)
24 Where some dance in a crowd is comical! (5)
25 This flower should mean quite a bit to you and me. (5)
26 That of an animal is usually 7 down, but not that of an apple. (4)

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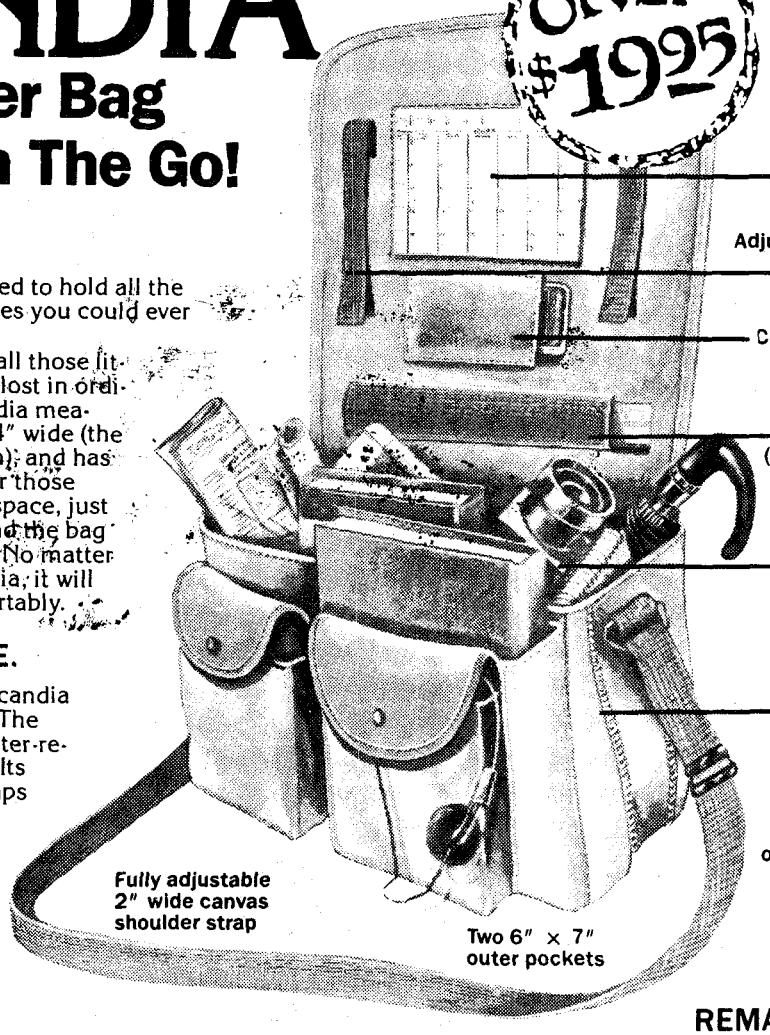
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#1377050	BURGUNDY		
	Merchandise Total		
	Add sales tax for deliveries to CT, MA, MN, NJ, NY, PA, & CA(6%)		
	Add $2.50 per bag ordered for shipping & insurance		
	ORDER TOTAL		

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